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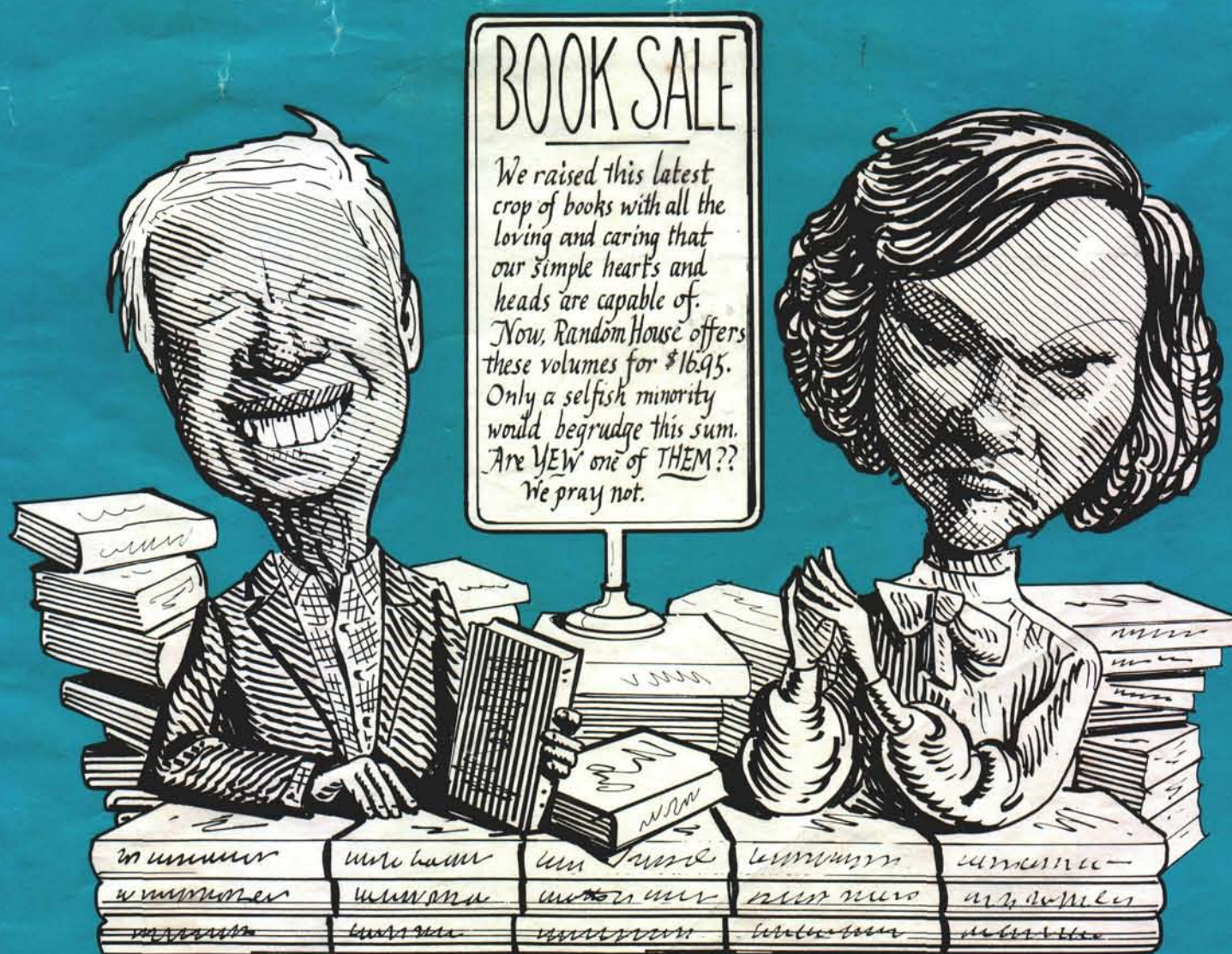
AUGUST 1987

A MONTHLY REVIEW EDITED BY R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR.

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The Closing of Allan Bloom's Mind

At Play with Jimmy and Rosalynn
by P. J. O'Rourke



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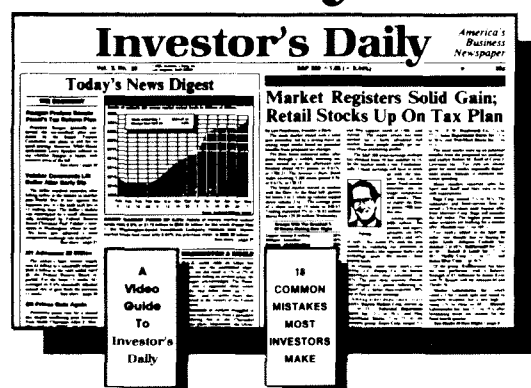
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Israel and South Africa

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What are the facts?

■ Israel is a multi-racial society. Its citizens, most of them “immigrants”, or children and grandchildren of immigrants, come from all corners of the globe. More than 55% are what we would call “non-Caucasians”. In the last few years, the government has expended much effort and money to ingather the Black Jews of Ethiopia. The concept of apartheid, of race discrimination, is repugnant to Israelis and to the Jewish religion. Condemnation of apartheid has been publicly expressed by every Israeli Prime Minister, beginning with David Ben Gurion.

■ Israel is not a significant factor in the arms trade with South Africa. The main suppliers of weaponry to that country are France, Britain, Canada, West Germany, Italy, India, and the United States. But South Africa has its own arms industry. It entered into a \$1 billion barter deal with Iran, by which it would supply weapons—mostly light and heavy artillery and shells—in exchange for oil. Ironically, but not surprisingly, a similar barter contract—for \$750 million—was signed with Iraq.

■ Oil is the life blood of South Africa's economy. All of it is imported, and not a drop comes from Israel, of course. Virtually every barrel of the approximately \$2 billion of yearly oil import comes from the Arabs—most of it from Saudi Arabia.

■ How about trade in general? The principal trading partners of South Africa in 1986 were in that order: U.S.A., \$3.4 billion (exports and imports); Japan, \$2.9 billion;

Germany, \$2.8 billion; U.K., \$2.6 billion—with Israel far in the rear with a total trade of \$0.2 billion, less than 1% of South Africa's total trade. And that does not take into account South Africa's vast (unrecorded) trade with the Black African countries, its collusive trading relationships in diamonds and precious metals with the Soviet Union, and its huge barter trade for oil with the Arab countries and Iran.

■ The Arab countries (with the exception of Egypt) consider themselves to be in a state of war with Israel. They do not trade with Israel at all. Other major countries such as Japan, India, China, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia are in sympathy with the Arabs or afraid of Arab reprisals. They do not trade with Israel either or only to a negligible extent. Israel, in order to survive, cannot be too choosy with whom to trade. But, in any case, political approval would not seem to be a requirement for trade.

After all, the United States and other Western democracies deal with South Africa, with the Soviet Union, and with other countries of whose politics they disapprove.

■ Israel has been repeatedly singled out and condemned for alleged nuclear collaboration with South Africa. It is a charge that Israel has denied categorically and constantly. A recent U.N. document—“South Africa's Nuclear Weapons Capability”—mentions certain countries in connection with nuclear collaboration with South Africa. Israel is not among them.

The facts are clear: Israel is a very minor player in trade and military relations with South Africa, has no nuclear cooperation, and has at all times condemned and denounced apartheid. In formulating policy towards South Africa, Israel, just as in its dealings with the Soviet Union, must take into account the vulnerable position of that country's large Jewish community. The perception that Israel has a particularly close relationship with South Africa is fostered by the Arabs, is based on distortion, and stems from hostility to Israel. A Congressional Committee and the Black Caucus of Congress have commended Israel for its government's resolution of March 18, 1987, regarding its relations with South Africa. Critics of Israel would also do well to judge its position on racism by its prodigious 20-year record of unprecedented development aid programs in 31 Black African countries.

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THE CONTINUING CRISIS



•June, a month best spent abroad where Italian voters deserted the Communist Party and British voters elected one more Thatcherite government. In Britain a resolute 40 percent of the electorate responded to the lucidities of Thatcherism as coolly enunciated by Mrs. Thatcher herself. In Italy, too, a lady pol campaigned on a platform fortified with ideas. That lady is Miss Ilona Staller, a porn *artiste* with a notably libertarian cast of mind, who campaigned topless and won a seat in the Chamber of Deputies on the Reaganite promise to get the government off our backs, or at least out from under our backs. Meanwhile in America the intellectual fervor of the Reagan Revolution continues to ebb as the Baker White House lumbers toward arms control with the suave Russians, tax increases with the Democratic glutons, and imbecilic muddle in Central America. Moreover, as a steady procession of Reaganite loyalists walk the plank at the Iran-contra hearings, it becomes ever more apparent that this White House is now about to fall in with the progressive intelligentsia's view that in the United States of America it should be *malum prohibitum* to be anti-Communist, as former CIA Director William J. Casey was anti-Communist and Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams is anti-Communist. America needs a Thatcher!

•On June 9, Senator Joseph Biden bewinged our spirits by announcing his intention to campaign for the Democratic nomination. "For too long in this society, we have celebrated unrestrained individualism over common community," intoned the father of Ashley, Beau, and Hunter—all old family names. Representative Patricia Schroeder of Colorado admitted her interest in the Democratic nomination, noting that there are "just an awful lot of things that I could contribute that aren't being said." And Representative Barney Frank, the neoliberal from Massachusetts, might also have designs on the Democratic nomination. His recent admission that he is a homosexual assures him the support of one of his party's most vociferous voting blocs; and it may ingratiate him to another bloc in the now aging Roosevelt coalition if we may make the logical deduction that it

means that he is also an occasional masturbator.

•The New York City Department of Health proposes to distribute free condoms throughout the summer at singles bars, pornographic movie theaters, massage parlors, and sex shops, to emphasize the perils of zoo sex. Equally effective would be the free distribution of sufficient barrels of spiritous beverage to diminish sexual appetites among these establishments' libidinous clientele. Apparently, however, the condom is the preferred instrument of "safe sex," as was demonstrated by Harvard University's bedroom Naderites at the 336th annual commencement exercises at Cambridge, Massachusetts. There, graduates of the Harvard University School of Public Health injected a new solemnity into the ancient rites by tossing 1,000 condoms into the air as symbols of their resolve in the raging battle for sexual consumerism. No injuries were reported, though more than one tricep *extensor cubiti* was imperiled. Yet the condom is not without its deficiencies. The Food and Drug Administration estimates that as many as 100,000 substandard condoms are recalled by their manufacturers.

•The Rev. Jim Bakker and his lovely wife Tammy Faye returned to their Christian Disneyland, "Heritage USA," for the first time since their PTL Ministry fell into the hands of the devilishly clever Rev. Jerry Falwell. Accompanied by her new lawyer, Mr. Melvin Belli, Mrs. Bakker sobbed to reporters that the Rev. Falwell has given

away the family's dogs and buried all her record albums in boxes somewhere beneath the vastness of this holy place. Five million people died in thirty-six armed conflicts during the United Nations' 1986 Year of Peace. Mr. Alan Greenspan will replace Mr. Paul Volcker as Chairman of the Federal Reserve. And Mr. Gary Hart's former press secretary revealed the good news that Mr. Hart will be returning to public life as a "man of ideas," with a series of lectures on "international topics."

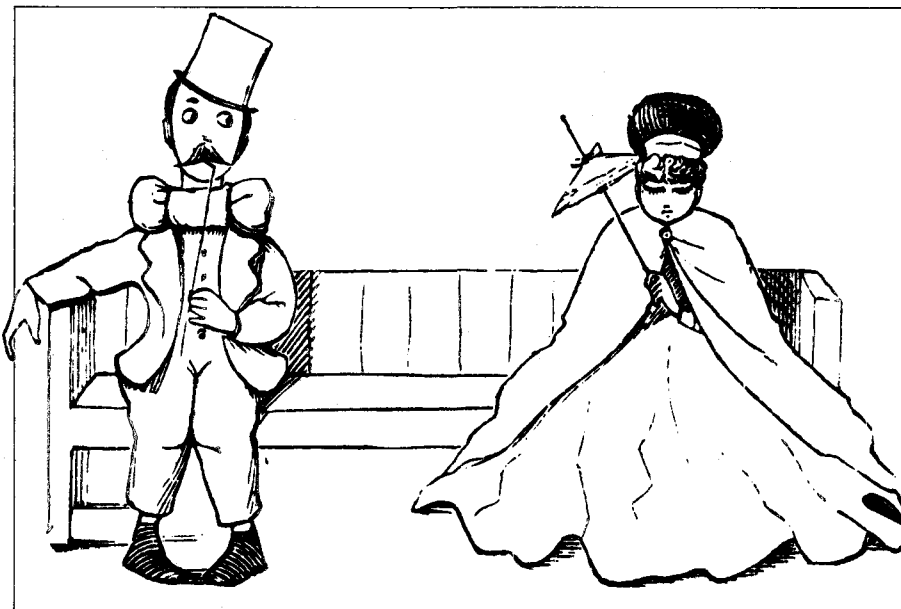
•In Wales, the River Wye Preservation Trust began a campaign to kill off the wild Welsh mink—a predator that has eradicated the water hens and sand martins on the Lower Wye in mid-Wales and even threatened dippers, wagtails, and voles. In Bangladesh the government is offering television sets and other electronic marvels as rewards to local sportsmen who bag 500 or more wild rats (*Rattus norvegicus*). Mr. Willie Nelson has become a board member of the United Theological Seminary. The American alligator was removed from the endangered species list by the Fish and Wildlife Service, and in India the government's program for saving the Royal Bengal Tiger from extinction has triumphed. Since the Indian government began Project Tiger in 1973, the Indian tiger population has climbed from 1,827 to over 4,000, though that increase has led to a regrettable loss of human life. In rural Arampur 80 percent of the village's 300 homes have no man. "All eaten by tigers," according to Mr. Surya Kanta

Roy, a village leader and outspoken reactionary on the topic of preserving the Royal Bengal. In London, restaurant-goers are boycotting a Leicester Square Chinese restaurant where kitchen help rampaged and, in the words of a member of the British Diplomatic Service, "clubbed" diners as though they were "baby seals."

•In New York City, Bernhard Goetz was acquitted on all counts save one, an illegal gun possession charge. The Algonquin Hotel, one of the city's literary gathering places for over eight decades, has been purchased by a Japanese corporation; and the Taxi and Limousine Commission is preparing a dress code for the city's cab drivers. In a follow-up to an earlier story reported on this page, Professor John Buettner-Janusch pleaded guilty to sending poisonous Valentine's Day chocolates to the home of Chief U.S. District Court Judge Charles Brieant. Professor Buettner-Janusch was imprisoned by Judge Brieant upon being convicted for operating a drug laboratory at New York University. He has since been removed from that university's faculty.

•The first anniversary of the closing of Nicaragua's independent newspaper *La Prensa* was observed very quietly by the American press, as was the Nicaraguan government's program to remove 6,000 villagers to "relocation camps." As of June 14, 94,000 Nicaraguans have been forcibly uprooted by the government as it continues the traditional Communist policy of improving hygiene, literacy, and docility among the proletariat. Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell resigned on June 26; and in Brooksville, Florida, Mr. Karl W. Hall attempted to drown his wife in the family waterbed before being restrained by his thirteen-year-old son, who had armed himself with a homemade walking stick chosen from the Halls' exquisite collection. Mr. Hall was provoked by a new hairdo his wife had rather recklessly adopted without permission.

•Mr. John Holmes, the matinee idol of American pornographic film who claims to have entered into conjugal relations with 14,000 members of the fair sex during an unsurpassed eighteen-year career, retired from acting after surgery for cancer of the colon disfigured him beyond recognition. In Belgrade, Yugoslavia, Mrs. Aleksandar



Glisin was charged with attempted murder for putting rat (*Rattus rattus*) poison in her husband's meatballs. Of all the large police departments in the nation, the Dallas Police Department was again ranked first in per capita use of deadly force. Mrs. Madalyn Murray O'Hair's American Atheists Inc. closed

up shop after twenty-four years of Godlessness. And a model drinker, Mr. Jackie Gleason, died. Directing his remarks to the nation's youth many years ago, Mr. Gleason counseled that "There is nothing wrong with drinking if you know why you drink. I know why I drink. I drink to get bagged."

•Mr. Jos Verbeek, the director of the United Nations Children's Fund in Belgium, was arrested for running a child pornography ring in the committee's Brussels offices. Sixteen other arrests have been made. Mr. Michael Jackson, the American soprano, was scotched in his attempt to purchase

from London Hospital the remains of the nineteenth-century Elephant Man, which he wanted for his home. Finally, during President Reagan's regular medical check-up two benign polyps were found in his colon but not, as the wags would have it, the bow tie of a distinguished Washington pundit.—RET

CORRESPONDENCE

Michael Ledeen's Foreign Policy

Michael Ledeen's essay "The Future of Foreign Policy" (*TAS*, June 1987) is deeply disturbing in its lack of proper historical understanding of our governmental system and its absence of respect for constitutional requirements. Few Americans would agree with his statement that "Ours is a revolutionary society, and we are committed to the spread of the democratic revolution." There's nothing in American constitutional history to warrant such a statement. Ours is a profoundly conservative society, judging by the letter and spirit of the U.S. Constitution, and the history of our diplomacy shows our commitment to parliamentary government which is distinctly non-revolutionary. "Democratic revolution" is Mr. Ledeen's private vision, not a cause embraced by the American people.

Thoughtful conservatives ought to be concerned with Mr. Ledeen's distaste for "narrow principles of American domestic law," which, he says, "are often out of place in the dangerous world at large." Conservatives favor changes in U.S. foreign policy but they are dedicated to the rule of law under a system of republican government. Moreover, there has never been a vote of the people in support of what Mr. Ledeen describes as "the kind of revolutionary policies we should pursue." The record of our national history makes clear a continuing commitment to evolutionary policies.

Finally, Mr. Ledeen's recommendation that we repeal the ban on assassination is out of order for a democratic society. He laments the fact that "we cannot recruit terrorists to our side . . ." Conservatives favor the use of the armed forces to strike at terrorists. They don't believe the United States should resort to counter-terrorism. We don't want to become a carbon copy of the enemy.

Mr. Ledeen clearly thinks of himself as one of the experts on foreign policy who knows more than ordinary citizens as to what U.S. policy should be. His flawed understanding of American history and constitutional rules illustrates the folly of leaving for-

ign policy to self-appointed "experts."

—Anthony Harrigan, President
USIC Educational Foundation
Washington, D.C.

Whatever may be the history of Michael Ledeen's essay in the June *American Spectator*, I disagree strongly with his ideas.

It is his view that the United States, as a "revolutionary society" committed to defending not only its geopolitical interest but also the ideal of democracy, has an *a priori* obligation to foster and sustain a worldwide "democratic revolution." Nowhere does he offer the slightest support for this idea other than the bald statement, itself unsupported, that America has and has always had a "commitment" to it (*Q.E.D.*!), with no limits of time, space, or circumstance.

How marvelous to live in a metaphysical entity instead of a mere country!

There are echoes here of the old Puritan exceptionalism, but I don't think the roots of this would-be policy lie in America's distant past. They are to be found, rather, in the panic-stricken salons of the 1970s: when intellectuals, horrified at the poisons they had let loose on society and realizing that a sinking America would sink them too, decided that they had better repair the damage fast and concocted a new propaganda line consisting of "human rights" and "democratic revolution."

Now, as though bowled over by this rush of flaming language, conservatives have acquiesced (again!) to the liberal scheme of transforming our containment of an expansionist adversary into a competition with that adversary for the right to impose our own global political monoculture. This Napoleonic project, having become a pillar of the Reagan foreign policy, causes that policy to look more and more like Jimmy Carter's policy, only with muscle added—and partaking of the same moralizing, the same posturing, and the same delirious tub-thumping.

Thus our dealings in foreign affairs take place in a kind of liberal thought-war. If we don't act for the most ex-

alted reasons imaginable, we can't act at all. Mere love for country and the desire for self-preservation aren't good enough. Instead, America must save everybody, lecture everybody, interfere with everybody, provide an example for everybody, take responsibility for everybody, supervise everybody, play the messiah of history, and in general fulfill the urges of every progressive missionary society and democratic gospel-spreader—or it must do nothing at all. Congressional liberals, the "do-nothing" faction, say our motives aren't pure enough; the best I can say for Mr. Ledeen is that his preposterous proposals are an attempt to overwhelm this opposition by superseding it.

Perhaps this says something about the Reagan Administration's overall strategy, which seems to consist of going *va banque* in every conceivable area. It's as though Mr. Reagan had taken the major fallacious tenets of liberalism—deficit spending, rhetorical overpromising, ethical over-reach—and pushed them to such berserk extremes as to amaze even liberals. The trouble is that they also amaze conservatives, or should. Whether it's being done by Mr. Reagan himself or by people who work for him to whom he pays no attention, the result is a roller-coaster ride of reckless and desperate gambles sustained by faith in the efficacy of *chutzpah*.

That, I think, particularly defines Mr. Ledeen's policy. Believing as I do that responsible choice consists mostly of opting for the lesser evil, I'm about ready to opt for my neighborhood liberal Democrat. He, at least, can be counted on to make conservatism look intelligent instead of stupid. Right now, considering what the Reagan Administration is cranking out, I'm not so sure how it looks.

—D. F. L'Hommedieu
Kearny, New Jersey

I was, on the whole, impressed by the argument set forth in Michael Ledeen's article on the future of foreign policy. I do note three errors, one minor and the others more serious. He overrates the role of attorneys in creating paralysis in government, he underrates

the achievements of our current President, and he shows some real naivete about the exportability of democratic ideals.

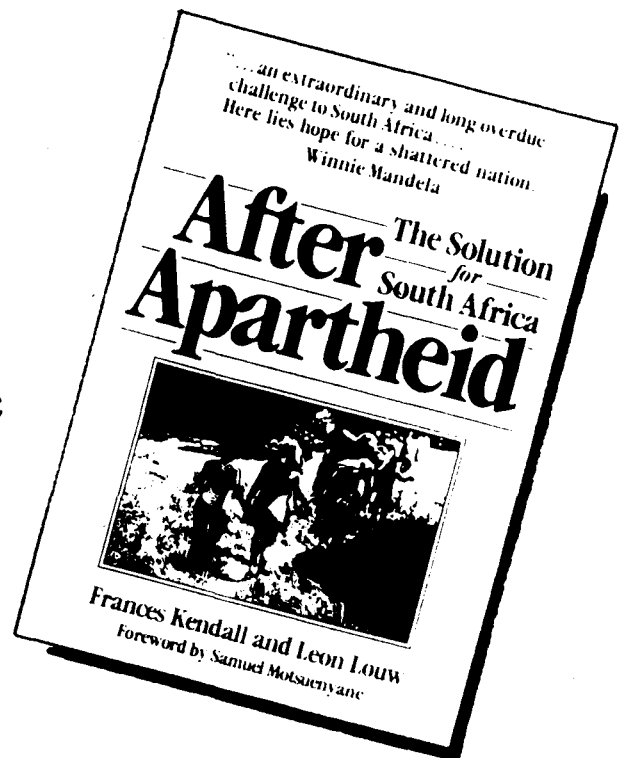
Mr. Ledeen's lawyer-bashing is annoying but does not detract from the content of his analysis. While it is absurd to blame legal counsel for telling governmental officials that illegal activity is in fact illegal, Mr. Ledeen is quite right in stressing that, for reasons of state, laws must occasionally be stretched. His criticism is properly directed at weak sisters in the executive branch who are unwilling to take necessary risks and at the congressional imbeciles who in the first place passed the various overly restrictive laws.

Mr. Ledeen's oblique attack on President Reagan is more distressing. Certainly, it is unfair to lump him together with the peanut farmer. While the President may have made some errors, he has consistently followed policies very close to those that Mr. Ledeen advises. While American politics in general and recent pieces of legislation in particular have forced him to distance himself from many of the concrete manifestations of his policy, it seems clear from testimony emerging before the Select Committee that the President has at all times been in full control of his administration. Like Eisenhower before him, he is a shrewd and capable geopolitical player who shields himself behind a mask of bland amiability. His lack of foreign policy experience prior to his assumption of the presidency makes his accomplishments all the more admirable.

Finally, Mr. Ledeen dismisses out-of-hand conservative suspicion of revolutionary movements. American democracy is the result of a unique historical experience and did not just pop up overnight. The assumption that its structure, or even its core values, can be easily transplanted into another historical setting is unsupported by world history. Certainly, some sort of counterforce has to be found to combat the growing influences of Soviet Communism, Sandinismo, Islamic fundamentalism, and other pestilential ideologies gaining ground in the Third World. Our
(continued on page 51)

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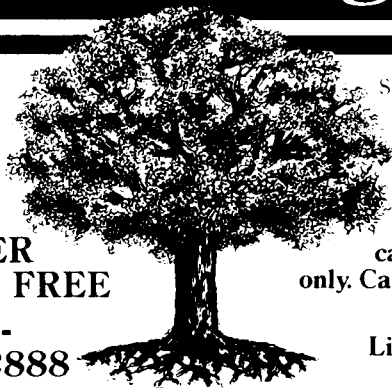
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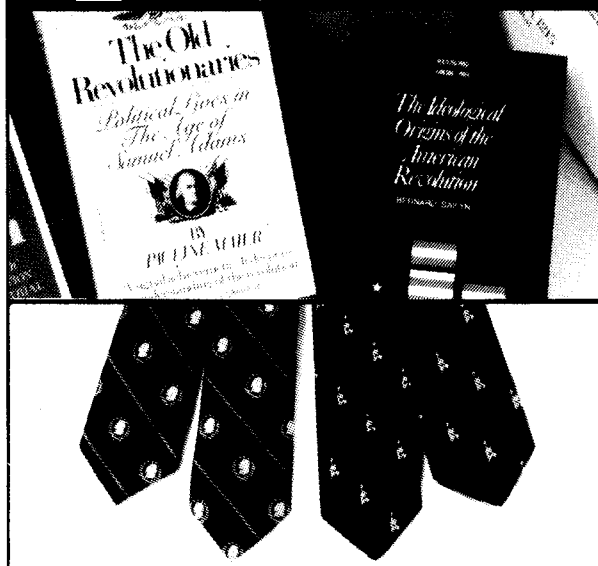
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EDITORIALS



THE SHADOWS OF WAR

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

History's great law of unintended consequences may be at work again in our nation's capital. According to my calculations, the congressional hearings into the Iran-contra affair are achieving something altogether different from the congressional investigators' intentions. They are tipping off the American citizenry that there brews in Central America a threat to our security that will have to be met soon or late. Ronald Reagan in all his eloquence has not been able to convey that important communiqué to the heartland, but recent testimony from those who have been trying to aid the contras has.

Apparently mail on Capitol Hill is running in favor of these witnesses. Polls indicate that the citizenry's interest in Central America is growing,

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post column syndicated by King Features.

and recent news stories suggest that dangers to America are increasing there. The Administration's opponents convened these hearings with high hopes that a pathetic collection of witnesses would bring discredit to the Administration and to the policy of opposing Communist expansion in Central America. Thus far, however, witnesses have generally acquitted themselves well, and it is increasingly possible that these hearings will stand as evidence of Congress's dereliction of duty come election day 1988. The news from Central America is not auspicious, particularly for those who believe in appeasing the area's revolutionaries.

In El Salvador Communist guerrillas supplied in part from Nicaragua have again brought their war to the cities. There has been an increase in Communist guerrilla activity in Guatemala, where Castro-trained guerrillas of the reinvigorated Guatemalan National

Revolutionary Union are increasingly clashing with Guatemalan army patrols in the countryside. The war in Nicaragua seems to be spreading, and recently there were reports that Ecuador's Communist guerrillas had received increased arms shipments from none other than the Sandinistas. All this disturbing news has not escaped the voters, and there may be worse news ahead.

The fact is that, owing to spreading terror and the threat of Communist takeovers, capital is fleeing Central America along with those professionals who create it. Throughout the region, economies are in a shambles. Real income has dropped by as much as twenty percent. Congressmen who oppose military approaches to subversion in the area and speak of "diplomatic solutions" urge that we invigorate these economies. But it is obvious that economies do not grow in a war zone, and ever larger areas of Central America are at war thanks to the activities of Cuba, the Eastern bloc countries, the Libyans, and the Sandinistas themselves, who are solidifying their dictatorship by repressing the Nicaraguan clergy, independent members of the press, and what vestiges of political pluralism remain. Money and military material is flowing into Nicaragua from our enemies far in excess of what Congress has been willing to spend in the defense of American interests. Meanwhile voters will remember that in the summer of 1987 the Congress

capped four years of dillying and dallying by excoriating the handful of Americans who tried to support anti-Communists in Central America before our Marines were needed.

Congress has been acting as though our enemies in Nicaragua will become our friends or simply become tranquil. Decades of dealing with Communist revolutionaries gainsay such fatuity, and the worrisome news stories now emanating from Central America make it clear that the problems ignored by Congress today are going to get worse. Yet it now appears that Congress wants to speed up this depressing process by rendering vacant that one State Department office that has defended American interests in Central America, that of Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams. Many on Capitol Hill want him fired for supposed infelicities committed by him during previous congressional testimony.

Abrams is one of the most competent men in American government. He is trusted by America's friends in Central America. Any offense that he has given to Congress has been small potatoes when weighed against his efforts to reverse Communist subversion. If disgruntled congressmen succeed in having him fired they will discourage the Sandinistas' enemies, encourage those who spread subversion in Central America, and make it ever more difficult for the Administration to secure additional aid for the contras in the months ahead. That is a recipe for increased trouble in Central America come election time 1988. □



TESTING AIDS PATIENCE

The AIDS controversy is but the latest in a long series of straightforward issues made rancorous and grotesque by fringe groups of the left and the right. For two decades or so, as intellectual and ethical standards have given way to the hoots of indignant primitives, we have seen serious matters rendered absurd and unresolvable. Remember the furor over juvenile

delinquency? Little was done about it in the 1950s when it was identified as a crisis, and little is being done about it today. It is as rampant as ever, but apparently it is a social problem Americans can live with. So apparently are most of the social problems associated with the urban crisis of the 1960s, for they endure. The problem of AIDS will not endure. It disposes

of its victims through certain death.

For years now, one sort of extremist or another has stepped in and rendered complicated these straightforward matters. And all the solicitude shown to the extremists has merely served to multiply their numbers and their obsessions. Many of these extremists who have such influence in public debate would, in earlier times, be adjudged *non compos mentis*; whereupon the discussion might proceed rationally, perhaps even fruitfully. Today the extremists actually shape the debate, deciding who can participate and what can be said. This is how the AIDS discussion has proceeded. To some degree it explains why the discussion has been so combustible and futile, and why the disease spreads.

The disease was only discovered six years ago, but for at least four years it has been recognized that no cure exists. Owing to the nature of the virus, the development of a vaccine to eliminate

the disease is unlikely and the development of a cure cannot be predicted. Even the treatment of the disease is doubtful, certainly very unpleasant, and expensive. Meliorists can dream up many reassuring things to say about AIDS; but as to its spread, its treatment, its prevention, and its cure, the pessimists' predictions are steadily being borne out. AIDS is, then, another serious matter that has been rendered absurd by extremists, but it is one serious matter that will not be rendered unresolvable even by them. AIDS is going to kill almost everyone who carries the virus. Today there seems to be little science or government can do about it, and in preventing testing the extremists are preventing us from taking even the rudimentary steps available toward limiting fatalities.

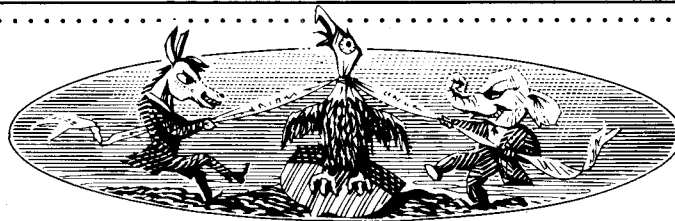
Some perfectly sensible and well-intentioned people have been explicating the grim side of this disease for most of its brief life. They have various-

ly been ignored or scorned as opponents of homosexuality or as Puritans. Of all the intellectual reviews in the country, *The American Spectator* has led in publicizing science's gloomy news about AIDS, yet not one of our pieces has ever been publicly commented on in such a way as to illuminate the discussion, ignorant as that discussion often is. In fact, a former member of Mrs. Thatcher's government responsible for British medical policy recently told me that when he mentioned these pieces—pieces that he admired—to some American health authorities they would not comment on the work, fearing that this would attract unwanted controversy. The extremists of the left and the right were then shaping the AIDS discussion and even AIDS policy.

The most serious medical threat to modern America has been treated

as a partisan political matter. As long as this continues, the victims of AIDS are going to increase in numbers as an ever-higher percentage of carriers of the virus die. That is what makes the recent outbursts against the government's call for routine testing so reprehensible. Knowing what we know about AIDS, there is no alternative to testing. Education is important but, in light of the knowledge we now have, both testing and education are only the first steps in containing what is a deadly and incurable infectious disease. The fanatics can demonstrate. The right-wing extremists can divine the word of God. The left-wing extremists can speak of civil rights and plots against minorities. The fact is that testing is inevitable. Once the death toll reaches a certain point, the vast majority of Americans who now support testing will insist on it and on more. AIDS is one social problem that we cannot live with. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



CONSERVATIVE BIRD, LIBERAL BUSH

by Tom Bethell

The story so far: *Republicans keep getting into trouble because they have so little sense of entitlement or legitimacy. They don't understand that government was envisioned by the framers of the Constitution as a neutral enterprise, with the laws applying equally to all. The framers thought of government officials as analogous to umpires, administering laws impartially. This changed with the New Deal. The Democrats established a new role for government as a player that was supposed to join in on the losing side, the idea being to equalize the score. Unable to counter this shift, the Republicans found themselves stuck with the villain's role: siding with the winners. Until they can find the courage to believe in the neutrality of government, Republicans in Washington will continue to slink along guiltily in the shadows.*

What a terrible disappointment President Reagan has turned out to be. He's a nice enough fellow, of Tom Bethell is *The American Spectator's* Washington correspondent.

course, but that is hardly what is needed in the Oval Office. What is needed is someone who knows what he wants and above all knows how to say no. Reagan's great weakness turns out to have been his craving for popularity—a quality that does not endear one to a man in authority. Norman Podhoretz recently alluded to Reagan's "insatiable greed for popularity. . . . He seems to have believed that the credit he would get if the hostages were freed would far outweigh the blame he might incur for violating his own declaratory policies on terrorism and on Iran. On this point Reagan made the worst miscalculation of his political career."

Reagan surrounded himself with people who thought of policy in terms of its impact on that night's, or perhaps the next night's, evening news. Everyone I know who has worked in the Reagan White House says this. They are unanimous on the point. And this, undoubtedly, was how Reagan himself thought of policy. Worthless Wirthlin was brought in to poll the populace (mustn't risk being unpopular, must we); senior officials nervously read the *Washington Post* in the morning and

studied the network news in the evening. The collective mindset of the Reagan White House seems to have been: "How we doing, fellas? Hey, they took some of our guys in Beirut! Hmhmhm, do you notice the media keep showing those families on television? Well, how about this for an idea? If we could somehow spring the hostages, think how great *that* would look on television. We'd go way up in the polls and we'd be the heroes for once! Instead of always being criticized for helping our rich friends. . . ."

That's been about the intellectual level I'm afraid. Podhoretz is right. Reagan had Rose Garden receptions for the released hostages. Reagan's actions on Iran make Jimmy Carter look statesmanlike, frankly. Carter's Iran hostages (Embassy personnel) really were his responsibility, he tried to rescue them but had bad luck and failed. The Beirut hostages never were Reagan's responsibility. But he seemed to think of them as photo opportunities.

"The bad news for conservatives is that Reagan no longer has to face the electorate," I wrote in this space eight-

een months ago, adding that Reagan "has chosen to insulate himself with a senior layer of advisers—I am thinking of the pragmatic firm of Shultz, McFarlane, Baker, Darman & Deaver—who are more in sympathy with Inner Beltway analysis than they are with the electorate." Mike Deaver was quoted by the *Washington Post's* Lou Cannon at that time as saying of Reagan: "He will be more realistic and more pragmatic than he has been." I added (*TAS*, February 1985) that "these people—Deaver & Co—are going to get President Reagan into big trouble before very long, if they haven't already gone a long way in that direction, on the topic of arms control. . . . How Reagan can have placed himself at the mercy of people of such poor political acumen is perhaps the major mystery of his Administration."

It's simple, really. And it was perhaps best put by Republican Congressman Newt Gingrich of Georgia: Reagan isn't Orson Welles, who wrote his own scripts, directed the movies, and

acted in them, Gingrich told a journalist recently. He is, well, Ronald Reagan—just an actor. It has been hard for conservatives to see this partly because it is exactly what the liberals were saying about Reagan for years. Nothing but an actor! Significantly enough, the liberals have now stopped saying it, and they stopped once they realized how true it was; that is, once they realized that Reagan indeed was

willing to read the script handed him by “pragmatic” Republicans; whose worldview in turn reflected the Beltway consensus of permanent bureaucracy, the State Department, the journalists, the Democrats . . .

Reagan became President with the tacit understanding that . . . look fellas, I’ll read it but you guys are going to have to produce and direct and be sure that we come in under budget.

And so it was that the same old Republican Establishment retained control. (Washington Watering Hole: Chumps and Charleys, “dedicated to serving the interests of businessmen in government,” Malcolm Baldrige, chairman; Bill Brock, secretary; Charles Z. Wick, hard-charger; Mike Deaver, supplicant.) Oh, sure, the Gipper was going to have to do some campaigning outside the Beltway to bring the people

along with him; but basically (they said at Chumps) we’re going to run a tight ship here. Maybe hire a few conservative speechwriters, even bring in Pat Buchanan for window dressing; let Tom Winter and the *Human Events* crowd into the Oval Office once a year for an interview with the Gipper. . . . That should keep that side of the aisle happy.

Meanwhile let’s slap some import quotas on those infernal Japanese autos, beef up the Export-Import Bank, see if we can’t do some business with that charismatic Machel in Maputo, add some new cash to the IMF so their Third World loans can repay our banks (which are, believe us, strapped); and, hey there hard-charging Charlie Wick, Armand Hammer says we should tone down the rhetoric at the Voice of America. The Gipper wants an arms deal with the Soviets. So let’s all lower our voices for once and see if we can’t be constructive.

And so the “realignment” that so many anticipated in the Republican party never did happen. The same Old Guard stayed in charge. The Gipper was their man and they saw him coming years ago in California. “The Governor has that useful old conservative rhetoric down pat,” they said among themselves. “Come on in, Ron!” they roared from the country club door. There was some elaborate handshaking, dues to be paid (just sign here, don’t worry we’ll make it up later), and he’s been an honorary member and duly grateful ever since. It is appropriate, after all, to be grateful to those who recognize your talents.

On the day after his triumphant re-election with an unprecedented electoral sweep in 1985, Reagan, having campaigned for Strategic Defense, said that he now had “an opportunity to press for a fresh start in arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union.” Since then his presidency has gone downhill. If he thinks it is going to be redeemed by an arms control treaty, he has been spending too much time reading the *Washington Post*. (Not that he’s going to get one.) Imagine the conservative outcry if Jimmy Carter had spouted those fantasies about abolishing nuclear weapons!

The candidate of choice at Chumps is of course George Bush; hardly a reassuring prospect. The supply-siders say not to worry, he won’t make it, but don’t forget the Junior Chumps (Lion, Elk & Rotary divisions) have all shaken George’s hand in the last decade. The postwar period shows that the Country Clubbers have a tenacious grip on the Republican party and they aren’t going to let go without a fight. My sense of George Bush is that, like the busi-

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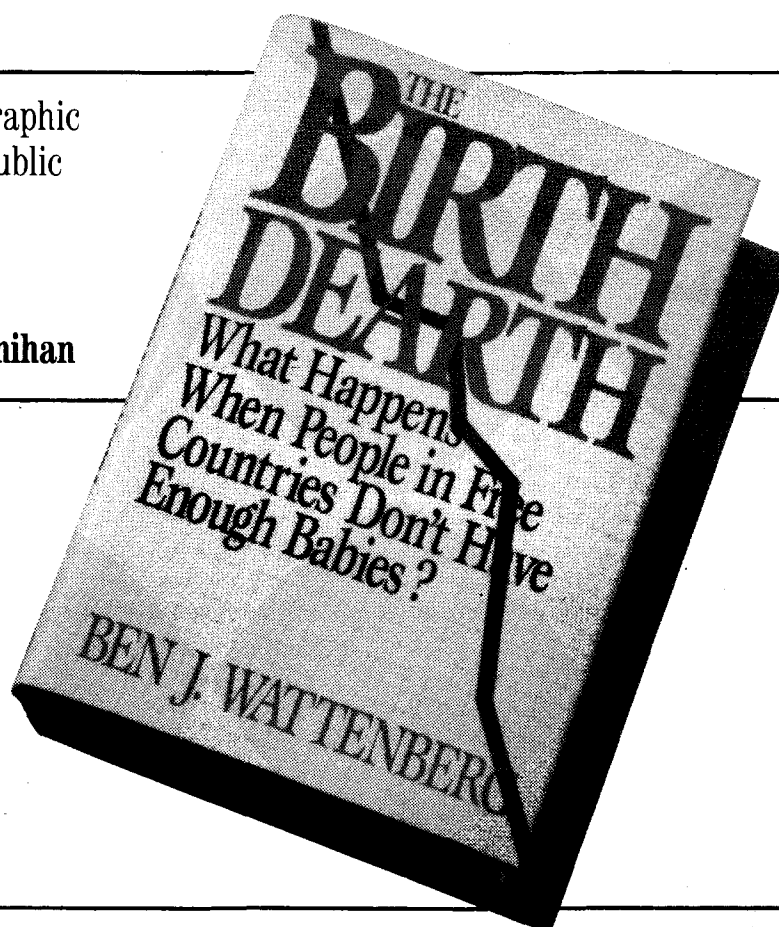
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ness establishment in general, he thinks of government as little more than an elaborate system of rewards, posts, and emoluments that the winners are entitled to hand out to their friends—*provided* they don't blow it by trying to alter the fundamentals of policy, which is the Democrats' preserve.

The Democrats would probably beat Bush with almost anyone except Jesse Jackson, however, so perhaps we don't have to worry about him. Failing Bush, Bob Dole looms on the horizon. Again, he would be only too happy to carry out the Chumps' agenda. Dole can project an image of toughness, which the electorate may well be looking for, and indeed he clearly is no wimp. But a compass seems to be missing from his makeup and one can see how easily he would be captured within the Beltway—raising taxes to balance the budget and so on. Dole is making conservative noises now, but he cannot be trusted. It is not at all reassuring that the news media Praetorian guard seems to have decided that Dole is their kind of Republican.

We can forget about Alexander Haig, who is actually campaigning for tax increases. Likewise, incidentally, some of the Democrats—Dick Gephardt, for example. Can it be they will repeat their tax mistake of 1984? Don't count it out—they are so blinded by ideology. The Labour party in England repeated its 1983 errors this year, and the Democrats today have much the same ideology.

Those who yearn simply for constitutional government and the rule of law had best get behind Rep. Jack Kemp, and the sooner the better. He is brimming over with ideas and genuinely relishes them (it's been a long time since the Republicans had a candidate like that!), and he alone among the Republican candidates would bring about the long-delayed realignment of the party. (Possibly Pete du Pont would also.) And I am as confident that Kemp would defeat any Democrat in the general election as I lack confidence that Bush would.

Finally, it's worth taking a closer look at Reagan's mistake. Evidently he thought of policy in terms of its support rather than its wisdom. And "support" he seemed to think of as comparable to box office in the movies. Voters or pollsters measured the one, customers the other. The conservatives were Reagan's fan club and he figured he had those birds in the hand. Then he reached to the liberal bush...

There was some basis for thinking along these lines, unfortunately. There has been almost no criticism of Reagan from his right. In retrospect I think that

Reagan has been badly hurt by the virtual taboo against criticizing him in conservative circles. (I heard there was even some murmuring about my mild, February 1985 comments quoted above. "Doesn't Bethell know we should be *grateful* for small favors? At least Reagan gives us rhetorical support, if nothing else...")

Popular support is indeed desirable, indeed essential, for a President, but

the trouble is that (as measured by pollsters) its decline doesn't show up until some time after the erroneous policy-course has been set. Pollsters, the very antithesis of leadership, really should be banned from the White House. As for trying to woo the liberals, hasn't Reagan yet heard that the policies they prefer have led to one disaster after another? Reagan's foreign policy is indeed in disarray, and

who has been in charge of it? George Shultz, who in turn took his marching orders from the Foreign Service. Not that there is any way Reagan will ever get the liberal (history-book writers') support he seems to crave. "Thank goodness you abandoned *your* principles (such as they were)," they will say, "but don't expect us to believe you have adopted *ours*." □

Some basic principles for foreign trade policy

Most Americans, and especially their elected officials, would tell anybody who asks that they favor free trade and deplore protectionism. Invariably, however, many of them add the word "but"—and all their caveats have cast the dark shadow of protectionism over the trade legislation now making its way through the Congress.

We can understand the appeal of the protectionists' siren song. Many American industries are beset by foreign competition, and our trade deficits are huge. But most economists agree that many of our problems are self-inflicted: America's huge budget deficit gave rise to high real interest rates, an overstrong dollar, and the consequent trade imbalance. The fact is, with today's dollar at a more realistic level, American products are becoming increasingly competitive in domestic and world markets alike. The problems are lessening.

But it takes time for large imbalances to disappear, and the caveats against free trade continue to be heard. Because trade is so vital to the economic well-being of America and the world alike, these caveats are worth examining. And on close scrutiny, in our view, they only serve to reinforce a set of principles that have long served as the basis for sound trade policy. Here's what we mean:

- "I'm for free trade, but a lot of countries are pushing America around." Actually, whether one is being pushed or doing the pushing depends on perspective. And rules do exist under which America and its trading partners have long conducted their commerce, and can settle their disputes. The rules are spelled out in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), to which the U.S. is a signator, and which for 40 years has kept a lid on the trade wars which raged before its creation. Even now, a new round of negotiations is under way to broaden and improve GATT. The principle underlying GATT: There are specific, internationally accepted rules governing trade, and enforcement procedures are already in place to protect all the players.

- "...but our trade deficit with Japan (or Taiwan or any country that's the whipping boy of the moment) is simply too high." The fact is, trade is multinational and involves all industries. The balance of accounts with any single nation tells only part of the story, and only at a given moment in time. Japan buys more from America than any country except Canada, despite our trade deficit

with that country. The U.S. continues to run aggregate trade surpluses in agriculture, aircraft, control instruments, plastics, and synthetic resins and rubber. Furthermore, investment balances are another part of the total picture. While at the moment the world sells more in the U.S. than it buys, foreigners invest more here than Americans do abroad—and foreign capital has been crucial in funding America's budget deficit. The principles to remember: Trade is a complex process that cannot be defined by any single measurement. And trade should never be used as a whip, or to gain political advantage. Should the U.S. politicize trade, we would be punishing the very nations that are our political allies, and we would make it much more difficult to retain our leadership role in the free world.

- "...but imports are costing the U.S. jobs." Are they? Since 1981, imports to the U.S. have risen by more than 40 percent, while America has created almost 11 million new jobs. During that time, unemployment in the U.S. has fallen—and risen sharply in Japan and Europe. Besides, some 5.5 million American jobs are linked to exports—every \$1 billion of exports supports more than 25,000 U.S. jobs. Think of the loss of these jobs, should America's trading partners retaliate against protectionist steps taken here. And one should never forget that U.S. consumers pay higher prices for protected goods. The principle at work: In the long run, protectionism costs more jobs than it saves, and it also distorts the economy by harboring inefficiencies and obsolescence.

Cordell Hull, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's secretary of state and the architect of Roosevelt's reciprocal trade agreements that helped pull America out of the Great Depression, once said: "Enduring peace and the welfare of nations are indissolubly connected with friendliness, fairness, equality and the maximum practicable degree of freedom in international trade." That's the basis of another trade principle: Never enact any trade measure you wouldn't like to see another country aim at you.

If our last principle seems classically simple and more than slightly familiar, well, nobody ever said the Golden Rule requires footnotes. Along with our other principles, we offer it as a basis of discussion—and a compass point to guide the nation through its current search for an effective trade policy.

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Charles R. Kesler

THE CLOSING OF ALLAN BLOOM'S MIND

An instant classic reconsidered.

Like every serious political movement since the thirteenth century, American conservatism has sought to reform the universities. Measured against the sweeping academic victories of twentieth-century liberalism, it has far to go. The Progressive movement quickly established its hold on American higher education, founding new departments and professional associations for the study of "scientific" political science and economics, for example, and educating thousands of young reformers who would go on to staff the agencies and commissions of the New Deal. FDR's triumph, in turn, confirmed and extended liberalism's hegemony over America's universities, which shows no imminent signs of abating. While here and there a conservative professor and perhaps even department can be found today, conservatism's influence on the academy as a whole is still negligible. William F. Buckley, Jr. diagnosed the problem thirty-five years ago in *God and Man at Yale*, and since then, in most respects, the situation has only grown worse. Just how much worse is revealed in Allan Bloom's exciting new book, *The Closing of the American Mind*.¹

Coming from the renowned translator and exegete of Plato's *Republic* and Rousseau's *Emile*—the greatest ancient and modern works on education—a critique of the modern university is bound to be learned, provocative, witty. This book is all three, and its reviews have been so disarmingly positive that in a matter of weeks it has displaced sex and diet books at the top

of the *New York Times* non-fiction best-seller list. Somewhat to the embarrassment of Bloom's thesis, which emphasizes the inability of Americans to digest serious thought, his book has become a popular hit.

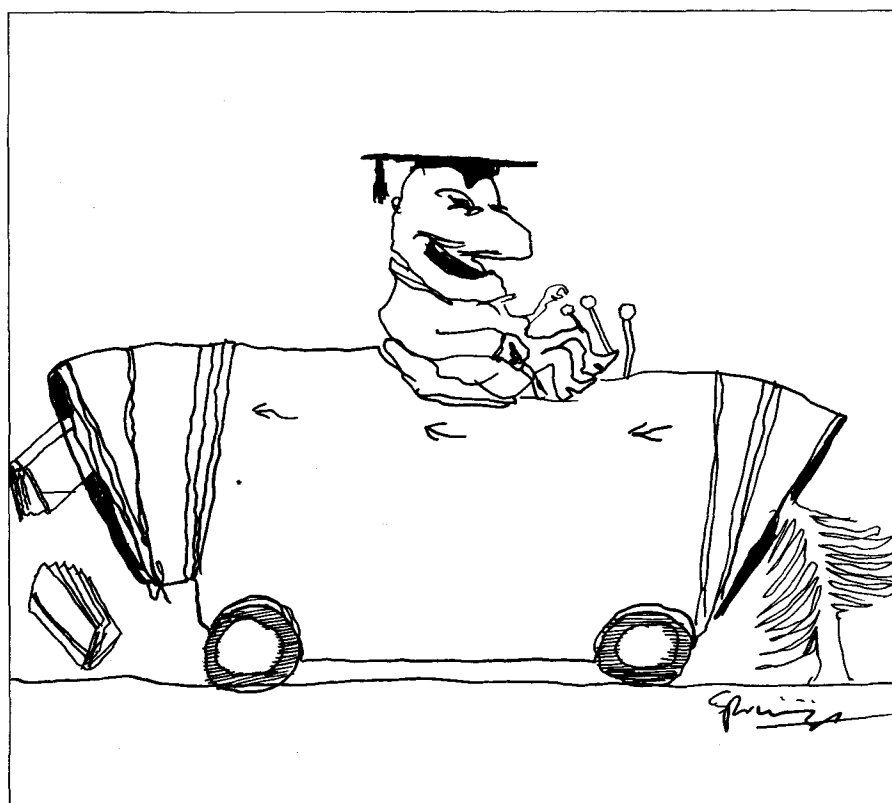
The Closing of the American Mind offers, in something of the Socratic manner, an unsparing but undogmatic review of the mores prevailing in the American academy. Bloom is at his most devastating in his depiction of the typical university professoriate, most of whom are beset by secret and not so secret self-loathing because, hoodwinked by the fact-value distinction, they are unable to defend the value of their own vocation. Concerning the students he writes poetically and movingly, limning the flatness, the "niceness" that he finds in them to the exclusion of any dominating passion or conviction. Recounting the declining influence on today's undergraduates of family, religion, books, and love, and the increasing sway of feminism, divorce,

rock music, and sex, Bloom invites Americans to think about what they and their children are becoming. His book pleads for a return to genuine openness, to the quest for knowledge of ourselves, to the undiminished and exalting *eros* that culminates in the love of wisdom, or philosophy.

Between sharp, vivid portraits of today's students and faculty members, *The Closing of the American Mind* examines the opinions that unite them—what Bloom calls "nihilism, American style." By uncovering the philosophical roots of the language of the contemporary academy, which is filtering down into society at large—words like "values," "commitment," "self," "life-style," and "creativity"—he shows how our vocabulary biases our thought, illustrating the gradual "Nietzscheanization" of the American mind. Bit by bit, Americans have lost what Dante called "the good of the intellect," the ability to distinguish between good and evil and to be guided by the good. Ameri-

cans like their Nietzsche watered down, however, so our relativism is easy-going and democratic—"nihilism without the abyss," in Bloom's words, and also without the Inferno. The result is both to vulgarize Nietzsche and to corrupt democracy, producing the moral virtue of our day, "openness." This is not the openness of inquiry but of indifference, the ho-hum acceptance of all principles and life-styles, the disposition to be "pro-choice" except when the conditions or consequences of choice are unpleasant—or when the choice is between good and evil.

But what is the character of the knowledge for which we long or ought to long? For all his talk of facing up to hard choices, Bloom never makes explicit just what is at stake educationally and politically. Consider his overall view of the present predicament. The American mind is divided between two stages of modernity: suspended between Locke and Adam Smith on the one hand, and Rousseau and Nietzsche on the other. From Locke derives the American devotion to the rights of man—life, liberty, property—and hence to the material prosperity that secures them, largely as a result of Smith's political economy. Rousseau was repelled by the self-interestedness of the Lockean scheme, which he thought destructive both of citizenship and of the genuine interests of the self, which were pre-social, pre-rational, and obscured by the "progress" Locke had unleashed. True satisfaction of the self's desires was possible only by the difficult peeling-away of the accretions of civilization, in pursuit of the sweet, natural sentiment of existence—a task that was possible only for a few solitary dreamers, not for society as a whole. Americans have, Bloom asserts, been affected by each of these strands of modern thought, so that we are schizophrenic as between self-interest and virtue, commerce and citizenship, calcula-



¹Simon and Schuster, \$19.95.

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tion and reverie. Locke urged us to escape the state of nature; Rousseau, in his individualist mode, to rediscover and return to it.

Nietzsche took Rousseau's critique of Locke to its extreme conclusion: that man was not naturally rational (in the beginning he was pre-rational, remember) meant that nature could not provide even minimal guidance to human reason and happiness. Reason showed, on the contrary, that there was a radical separation between facts (the residue of nature) and values (the constituents of human happiness and flourishing). All values were relative, which meant that it was impossible to choose rationally between, for example, Locke and Rousseau; but it was necessary for human beings to will or create values, not for the sake of truth but for the sake of life.

What makes the American mind interesting, therefore, is precisely how its original Lockeanism has been deepened and complicated by the contradictory Rousseauian longings for social solidarity and individual happiness. As radicalized by Nietzsche, these desires are the cause of our contemporary illness; the German philosophical invasion has, like some dread virus, penetrated to the nucleus of American life and begun to take over the whole cell. Democracy has fallen victim to "alien views and alien tastes."

That, at least, is the impression given by the main contours of Bloom's argument. But when one looks closer, one discovers that Nietzscheanism is not simply an adventitious infection, exploiting a weakness (there are bound to be some) in American intellectual life; but that it so completes what was left incomplete in the American Founding as to be almost its culmination, rather than its corruption. For as Bloom describes it, the Founding was based on the "rights doctrine," deriving from Hobbes via Locke, which deduced rights from man's passions; and far from being conditional on man's obligations to God (as Madison and Jefferson had argued, for instance), it was meant to attenuate, if not to abolish entirely, man's reliance on anything higher than himself. To put it differently, the center of the American Founding was blank. Everyone had the right to pursue happiness, but the idea of happiness had no objective content; it was a matter of opinion (including religious opinion). Thus there was no way of life that could reasonably be said to fulfill man's nature or to be in accord with the divine or natural order. The story of American life—according to Bloom—consists therefore of various attempts, ever more "creative," to fill that empty center.

Thus, far from Nietzscheanism being alien to American political principles,

it was the (admittedly) radical conclusion waiting to be drawn from those principles. Nietzsche, who became notorious for his declaration "God is dead," only reported His demise. In fact, God was the victim of an elaborate assassination plot and coup—masterminded by Hobbes and Locke but executed over here by their minions (or dupes), the American Founders.

Yet for a book on the American mind, there is very little discussion of the works of that mind at its best and most authoritative. Bloom writes

***The Closing of the American Mind* scintillates, but it is not particularly conservative either in the popular or the philosophical sense of the term.**

compellingly on Rousseau, Nietzsche, Flaubert, Goethe; but his references to the Founding Fathers are schematic at best. Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison are simply invoked—or rather, invoked simply, as epigones of Hobbes and Locke. Like most of the superficial scholarship that he criticizes so eloquently, Bloom reduces the Founders to children of their age, of the Enlightenment. The result is sometimes amusing if not always enlightening. "It should be noted," he writes, "that sex is a theme hardly mentioned in the thought underlying the American Founding. There it is all preservation, not procreation, because fear is more powerful than love, and men prefer their lives to their pleasures." As a description of Hobbes and Locke, this is unexceptionable; but of the American Founding which depended on Founding Fathers—who were, after all, creating a nation, which would certainly seem to make them procreative; just ask the Daughters of the American Revolution—it quickly runs into difficulties. Besides, the Founding involved precisely the revolutionaries risking their lives, as the concluding words of the Declaration of Independence proclaim: their lives, fortunes, and "sacred honor" were all pledged to the cause of freedom. That cause was more precious than mere life.

Bloom is eloquent on the subject of sex and on the philosophic *eros* but he has very little to say about "sacred honor" except to depreciate it in comparison to the philosopher's quest for the good. In connection with America, the idea of honor figures hardly at all. This is shown clearly by his treatment of the character of today's youth, whom he presents, in Platonic terms, as shaped overwhelmingly by the music they love. But Platonic education con-

sists of gymnastic as well as music, and on gymnastic Bloom is silent. The same students who are listening routinely to rock music—and by the way, Bloom is a little old-fogeyish on this question, reducing all of rock to "the beat of sexual intercourse"; but could this really be said, for example, of the Beatles, Bob Dylan, The Four Tops?—these same devotees of rock are also playing softball and rooting for the local sports teams. To be sure, the character of athletes is not incorruptible. Magic Johnson, for example, has said that if he could be one person in the world he would want to be the rock

cellence (even in one's opponents), and to emulate those who are the best, is such a basic part of the American character that we are perhaps tempted to discount or overlook it. But surely no student of Plato, evaluating the effects of education on Americans' souls, ought to overlook the games that we play both as children and adults. The connection between "beautiful men" and "beautiful citizens," between the spiritedness and nobility of athletics and politics, is almost completely lost on Bloom.

It is certainly a melancholy observation that the years of precipitate decline in American education—since the Second World War, but especially since the 1960s, according to Bloom—are also the years of the rise of American conservatism. This counter-revolution, along with other developments with important consequences for education and politics—e.g., the revival of Protestant evangelicism and the new prominence of country music—he passes over without comment. Of course these trends did not much affect life in the major universities, which is the focus of Bloom's inquiry. Their neglect does, however, together with the omissions already noted, indicate the real limitations of his book. It is not that concentrating on the top thirty or so universities is unreasonable. What is unreasonable is to label the vivid description of their intellectual decomposition as an account of "the American mind." Doubtless their graduates do go on to commit all sorts of mischief; one, for example, would go on to write *God and Man at Yale*. The problem is that from the point of view of the best and, in the highest sense, most characteristic American thought,



the pinchbeck Nietzscheanism of the major universities, and of some parts of popular culture, deserves to be called an expression of the *un-American* mind. Bloom is not particularly interested, however, in the high-minded point of view of the Founding Fathers, Lincoln, and (in attenuated form) the majority of Americans—not because he dislikes America but because, *au fond*, he is not interested in politics. He just cannot take it seriously, except as a threat to philosophy.

That is why *The Closing of the American Mind* only resembles a Socratic inquiry. It is not really dialectical, but historical. It traces the philosophical etymology of the words used by today's undergraduates—"values," "commitment," and the like—but it does not reproduce much of the conversations in which these words occur. There is little effort to ascend from these notions to something higher; there is plenty of comparison, but little argument and definitely no "moralizing." Bloom objects to American nihilism not because it is immoral, but because it is thoughtless; and he does so without giving any account of whether a thoughtful morality exists or in what it might consist.

That this philosophical abdication is not merely temperamental is shown in Bloom's account of Socrates as, in effect, the inventor of the university or of the problem of the university. Prior to what Socrates called his "second sailing," philosophers from Thales to the young Socrates himself had inquired into nature, but had deprecated politics as the realm of convention concerning which genuine knowledge was impossible. But in Bloom's hands, Socrates becomes Thales with legal problems. According to Bloom, political philosophy, of which Socrates was traditionally regarded as the founder, means *politic* philosophy pure and simple; it is a form of public relations, a set of techniques for shielding atheistic and amoral philosophers from persecution by the many, allowing them to live peacefully among their deluded (i.e., moral) neighbors. By learning to write carefully—esoterically—and so perplexing their meaning that only a few fit souls would penetrate the orthodox surface of their works to discern the subversive teachings and forbidden pleasures underneath, philosophers could avoid Socrates' fate without abandoning his pursuits. The world could, as Bloom puts it, be made safe for philosophy.

Of course, this meant that there was not really a Socratic turn in philosophy, that Socratic and (so-called) pre-Socratic thought were not fundamentally different. Political philosophy was simply the public or pious presentation of impious, hence politically danger-

ous, truths, chief among them being that "Zeus is not," i.e., that the gods of the city, the guarantors of justice, do not exist. Instead of being the first philosopher to take ethics and politics seriously—to philosophize by questioning men's opinions about "What is justice?" "What is courage?" and so forth, because he saw that man is the microcosm, and that philosophy without political philosophy is largely nugatory—Socrates was a theorist who

modern political history without a discussion of Locke, Rousseau and Marx." But can one imagine a discussion of modern political history—of the university as part of modernity—that is nothing *but* a discussion of Locke, Rousseau, and Marx? Politics is replaced by history, and not even by genuine political history but by the history of modern political philosophy, in Bloom's account of America.

Somewhat to the embarrassment of Bloom's thesis, which emphasizes the inability of Americans to digest serious thought, his book has become a popular hit.

needed a good lawyer and better P.R., both of which he in effect got in Plato.

Which is not to deny that the "politic" presentation of philosophy is a vital part of political philosophy's meaning; but it was only a part, complemented by the serious philosophic study of "the human things," moral and political affairs. It was as students of such affairs that political philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero prudently offered advice to present and future legislators.

Bloom contends, however, that political philosophers never seriously considered themselves as teachers of legislators, because the philosophic study of politics and morality did not amount to very much. Oh, he admits that "politics was a serious study to the extent that one learned about the soul from it"; but on the evidence of his own approach in this book, there is little that one can learn about the soul from politics, as opposed to erotics or culture. "Reading Thucydides," he writes, "shows us that the decline of Greece was purely political, that what we call intellectual history is of little importance for understanding it. Old regimes had traditional roots; but philosophy and science took over as rulers in modernity, and purely theoretical problems have decisive political effects. One cannot imagine

Although he doubts that politics has anything to teach philosophy, Bloom concedes that political or "politic" philosophy has something to teach politics, namely, moderation; politics must be moderate, mostly if not entirely to protect philosophers. What about justice and the common good? There is no discussion of any politically relevant form of natural right or justice in the book; and this is related to the strange, looming absence of Leo Strauss, who was Bloom's teacher. Strauss's influence is evident throughout, indeed it is massive; but his name is mentioned only once, as an authority on the "low but solid" foundations of modernity. The critique of modern education is, however, generated more out of Nietzsche and Heidegger than out of Strauss. It is Nietzsche and Heidegger who really show that philosophy is possible in this century, for it is they—not Strauss—who were "able to face down both natural science and historicism, the two great contemporary opponents of philosophy."

Like Nietzsche and Heidegger, Bloom emphasizes the need to retighten the bow of life, to restore the tension and striving that are necessary for man to become great again. This requires re-creating "prejudices, strong prejudices," on the reasonable grounds that the completely unprejudiced mind is empty; for philosophy to liberate men from prejudice, to vivify their souls, they must first be opinionated.

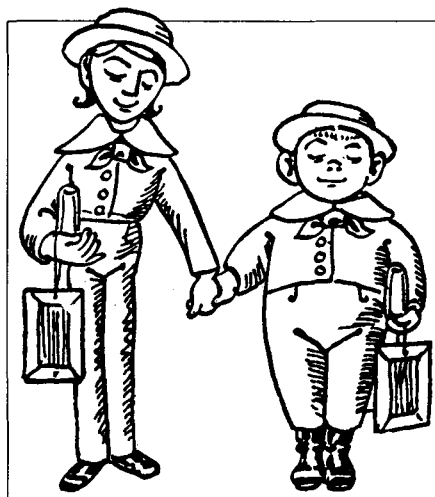
Where in American life are these opinions or prejudices to come from? Not from the Founding Fathers' principles, which are too low and selfish, too unerotic; their inevitable exhaustion is what has got us in the present fix. In essence, a new religion or world-view is needed. Given philosophy's inability to will such a new *Weltanschauung*, however, Bloom must settle for "the good old Great Books approach" as a method for restoring aware-

ness of the fundamental opinions.

Great Books are of course less dangerous than Nietzsche's overman as a solution to the problem of the "rights doctrine" and its embodiment in the modern democrat, the bourgeois, the "last man." Yet Great Books are not a religion, certainly not the Old Time Religion; they restate rather than solve the fundamental problem, which is to will meaning back into the world. Instead, they become a kind of alternative to Socratic dialectic, a sort of hope or illusion necessary to make life worth living. "Perhaps it is our first task," Bloom declares, "to resuscitate these phenomena [opinions or prejudices] so that we may again have a world to which we can put our questions and be able to philosophize. This seems to me to be our educational challenge." Perhaps this is why we seldom see in Bloom's book the elementary responses to students' opinions, concerning, for example, the relativity of "values"—the follow-ups that question, cajole, charm them into sense. Political philosophizing along these lines is always possible, and though powerfully assisted by the Great Books approach, is not dependent upon it to reconstitute a "world" of opinions. Bright students have plenty of opinions, especially about politics.

Bloom's impoverished or abstract conception of political philosophy, which radically separates morality and philosophy, might seem to be balanced by his accounts of the casual amorality of today's students and the cowardice and phony idealism of Cornell's faculty during the 1969 campus upheavals. Despite his frequent disclaimers of any intention to "moralize," it is these sections, in which he moralizes in spite of himself, that are the highlights of the book. But, to take the latter example, even his marvelously sardonic account of the Cornell uprising studiously avoids proper names. In more than twenty pages devoted to the collapse of the Cornell administration and faculty before the strident demands of the New Left, not a single participant (other than Father Daniel Berrigan) is named! I doubt that this peculiar reticence is caused by delicacy. Rather it is the way that politics looks when moral indignation, which likes to single out the innocent, the guilty, and the heroic, is proscribed as unphilosophic; and when the discrete phenomena of politics are subsumed under theoretical categories. The shameful episodes at Cornell become mere examples of Heideggerianism working itself out.

At the same time, it should be noted that Bloom does not regard the radicals' victory at Cornell and elsewhere



to have resulted in the further alienation of the university from society. On the contrary, he understands it as a further subordination of the university to society, as part of the general relaxation of standards that he believes to be characteristically American. It was all a venture in "egalitarian self-satisfaction," with students substituting "conspicuous compassion" for their parents' "conspicuous consumption."

It was not long afterward that at least some of these parents and other members of Nixon's great "Silent Majority" saved the country from George McGovern, the kids' candidate. Given that Bloom correctly, and courageously, compares the New Left to the Fascist movements of the 1930s, one would expect him to have a few words of gratitude for the good sense of the vast majority of American voters who arrested the spread of Radicalism from the campuses to the national government.

The *Closing of the American Mind* scintillates, but it is not particularly conservative either in the popular or the philosophical sense of the term. Clearly Bloom's view of the American people is that they are even lower and less solid than they used to be. When it comes to handling serious German philosophy, we are "children playing with adult toys," it is all "too much for us to handle," and so on and so forth. It does no good to point out that the Germans seem to have had rather more deadly trouble with these toys than we, because at least they took their philosophy seriously, which from the strictly intellectual point of view is the thing that counts. It is at least arguable, after all, that nihilism *with* the abyss is to be preferred to "nihilism without the abyss."

In any case, the significant question is not whether the moral and intellectual tone of the American people has declined—it has, and Bloom has some harsh truths to tell us on this subject, though the decline has not always been for the reasons he presents, nor is it as bad or as comprehensive as he maintains. The truly serious question is how one ought to view this decline: in the light of America at its best, or in comparison with America at, if not its worst, then at its typical level of vulgarity. Although Bloom mentions the "race of heroes" bred out of the Declaration of Independence—men like Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln—he dismisses them almost in the same breath. They are *passé*, simply no longer believable; "openness has driven out the local deities, leaving only the speechless, meaningless country." In adopting this point of view, however, he violates his own maxim, that "awareness of the highest is what

points the lower upwards." This, in turn, is Bloom's rather restricted version of Strauss's basic hermeneutical rule, that "it is safer to try to understand the low in the light of the high than the high in light of the low. In doing the latter, one necessarily distorts the high; whereas in doing the former, one does not deprive the low of the freedom to reveal itself fully as what it is."

In fairness, the dispute is really over what constitutes "the high" in American life. In the United States, "the greatest of thoughts," Bloom remarks, "were in our political principles but

Bloom objects to American nihilism not because it is immoral, but because it is thoughtless.

were never embodied, hence not living, in a class of men. Their home in America was the universities, and the violation of that home was the crime of the sixties." True, there was never a class of priests or aristocratic censors empowered to enforce political orthodoxy in America, and that is all to the good. But there was in fact a class of men charged with embodying, with living out America's political ideals: her citizens. It was they who were charged with the duty of being Americans, of living up to the country's principles; and the pre-eminent duty of our statesmen has been to remind us of and to defend those principles, to help to educate a properly American citizenry. There is no real consideration of this, the pre-eminent political dimension of the education of the American mind, in Bloom's book. But that is because civic education as such is not taken seriously. In nearly four hundred pages, Bloom does not mention even once the most famous of all attempts to educate the American mind—Jefferson's intricate blending of civic and philosophic education in his plan for the University of Virginia.

Is it really necessary to discuss civic education in a book on American higher education? That depends on what one believes college students, and colleges more generally, might owe to their country. In keeping with his position on the primacy of the intellectual, Bloom declares that the primary obligation is for society to minister to the universities, and not the other way 'round. If the proposition were that society ought to be ministerial to the truth, and particularly to the truth(s) that makes it free, then it might be reasonable. On the evidence brilliantly adduced in this volume, however, it is hard to see anything very good, or true, or beautiful in today's universities. Yet

Bloom's position is that the university's independence from and indeed superiority to liberal society ought not to be compromised one inch. Hence his revealing treatment of McCarthyism in the 1950s: "McCarthy, those like him, and those who followed them, were clearly nonacademic and anti-academic, the barbarians at the gates."

Those "barbarians" were the nascent American conservative movement, and foremost among them was, of course, the young William F. Buckley, Jr. *God and Man at Yale*, though antedating the heyday of McCarthyism, was spiritually part of this vigorous anti-Communist

nism; and Buckley, with L. Brent Bozell, would soon after write the most intellectually satisfying apology for McCarthy, *McCarthy and His Enemies*, which had the misfortune to be published just as the Senator was self-destructing in the Army-McCarthy hearings. That a popular reaction (even with some excesses) to the horrors of Stalinism might have been healthy, and in principle even reasonable, Bloom apparently denies. The logical absurdity of tolerating intolerance, of granting absolute freedom to Communists and others who would destroy freedom, is acknowledged by him; but it does not affect his philosophical politics, which

distrusts all popular movements as potential threats to philosophy.

Yet from its earliest beginnings, American conservatism has presumed that the case for free society rested on the ability of free men and women to make precisely such difficult, and often painful, distinctions between tolerable and intolerable uses of liberty. To this extent, conservatism has insisted on viewing the low in the light of the high, has adopted the viewpoint of American citizenship at its best, has, sometimes clumsily, striven to call Americans back to their own best selves. Without always being able to articulate the principles of America, the conservative movement has presupposed that they were rationally defensible, that philosophic reason could pronounce in their favor, that politics and morality could pass muster. Allan Bloom questions the rational grounds of American moral and political principles, incisively and seductively. But in divorcing the American mind from moral and political questions as they actually present themselves to American citizens, he forces us to wonder how philosophy, and the academy, and ultimately the Republic, can be kept from becoming either frivolous or fanatical. This question, which dogs Bloom's bravura performance from beginning to end, suggests that the educational challenges facing American conservatism, from within and without, are greater than they have ever been. □

How many undeserved radar tickets were issued last year?

- a) 1,012,317
- b) 649,119
- c) 0
- d) No one knows

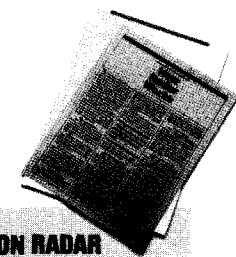
Unfortunately, the correct answer is d) No one knows. Over 10,000,000 tickets were issued last year. By some estimates, up to 30 percent of them were incorrect. Traffic authorities like to say that radar is as accurate as a yardstick. And that's the problem. You know how two people can get different answers using the same yardstick. Even if only 1 percent of the tickets issued last year were the result of radar errors, that's still 100,000 undeserved tickets.

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Our engineers are radar experts. They had to know every detail about traffic radar before they could design ESCORT and PASSPORT, the most respected names in radar detection and warning. *Road & Track* called us, "The industry leader in detector technology."

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David Brock

DEMOCRAT FOREIGN POLICY SCANDALS

They involve congressmen with peculiar sympathies for Communist causes.

Forget, for a moment, that riveting Iran-contra inquisition. Another earthshaking Washington foreign policy scandal is poised to blow. Like Iran-contra, this is a tale of secret fundraising for a ragtag bunch of Central American guerrillas; of nefarious foreign governments manipulating naive American officials; of an effort to misinform Congress; of possible abuse of the U.S. tax code and obstruction of justice; and of ideological fervor run amok.

But unlike Iran-contra, this is a scandal that will not be probed by an "independent counsel" or a special congressional committee. Nor, for that matter, by anyone so empowered. For this scandal is not a scandal at all in the eyes of the would-be prosecutors in Congress and the media. For them, a conspiracy by members of Congress to aid the Communist cause in Central America should either be applauded or simply swept under the rug.

Five years ago, this radical underworld was rather marginal, even in Democratic councils. But today its members have assumed key policy-making positions in Congress, especially dealing with Central America. In a report on the influence of the far-left Institute for Policy Studies on members of Congress, the Heritage Foundation said, "It can be argued that this group is hardly representative of the ideological mainstream of the House of Representatives; but it must also be conceded that many of these men and women have been among the most vocal and visible members of the House in recent years. They have formed a left-liberal grouping that has managed to achieve a degree of influence in certain specific areas and which has been especially active in the national defense-national security area." At the head of this new class: Sen. Christopher Dodd and Rep. George Crockett, who were installed by

the Democrats to head the Western Hemisphere subcommittees of the Senate Foreign Relations and the House Foreign Affairs committees after last November's elections.

Dodd wasted no time using his new clout. In December, Dodd, whose latest offensive against the Reagan Administration's Elliott Abrams is on the "credibility" issue, was in Managua as the centerpiece of an elaborate Sandinista disinformation campaign. Dodd negotiated with the Sandinistas to secure the release of Eugene Hasenfus, an American apprehended by Nicaraguan authorities after his plane was shot down. (Hasenfus was apparently carrying supplies to the contras.) But his release was not the result of spontaneous diplomacy. Before leaving Washington, Dodd made it known that the public relations benefit from springing Hasenfus would help his effort to defeat contra aid. The morning after Hasenfus's release, Dodd was on

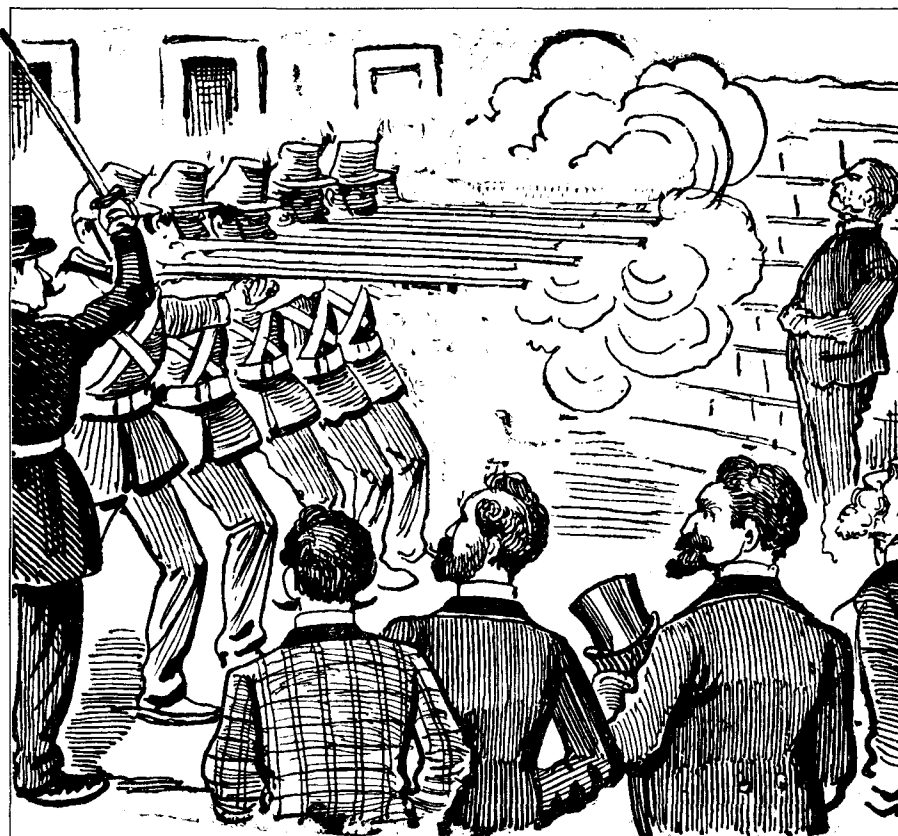
ABC's "Good Morning, America" explaining that Hasenfus was pardoned because "it is the Christmas season" and Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega was "humane." But Sofia Clark, a spokesman for the Nicaraguan embassy in Washington, told the *Washington Post* in a candid moment that Hasenfus would do the Sandinistas more good testifying before Congress and giving press interviews than he would in a Sandinista jail.

Hasenfus, of course, was convicted in Nicaragua for participating in a war the U.S. Congress had endorsed. But that didn't stop Dodd from undermining U.S. policy and negotiating with the Sandinistas to serve his, and their, ends. Described in a 1982 Sandinista government primer on how to manipulate the U.S. Congress as a "friend of the revolution," Dodd told the Associated Press in May that he has the votes to defeat contra aid this fall. But he admitted he would "probably lose those

votes if I started talking about economic aid for the Sandinista government." First things first.

Crockett, who has a long history of associating with the U.S. Communist Party, edged out the senior subcommittee member, Rep. Dan Mica, to become Dodd's counterpart in the House. (Mica failed the Democrats' litmus test: he supports contra aid.) Crockett has been a sponsor of the Civil Rights Congress and an officer of the National Lawyers Guild, both widely thought to be Communist front groups. In the 1960s, Crockett was identified in media reports as a registered agent for the government of Cuba (government records were not kept on foreign agents at the time, so this can't be verified). While in Congress he has advocated lifting economic sanctions against Cuba. What is more serious, as chairman of a House panel, Crockett and his staff now have increased access to classified U.S. documents.

In May, the public got its first taste of how the House Western Hemisphere subcommittee will operate under Crockett. Crockett invited David Linder, the father of Benjamin Linder, an American working for the Sandinistas who was killed in a Nicaraguan combat zone in April, to testify; Linder charged that the U.S. government had killed his son. Crockett, over the objections of his colleagues, allowed highly tendentious "medical data" from the Sandinista government about the circumstances of Linder's death to be introduced. No note was made of the fact that the Sandinistas have given conflicting accounts of how Linder died, nor that Linder had crossed the line dividing civilians and combatants by toting an assault rifle and traveling with Sandinista militiamen. Crockett staffers attempted to have J. Michael Waller of the conservative Council on Inter-American Security struck from the witness list, but Republi-



David Brock is a writer for *Insight magazine*.

can objections staved off the move.

A cable from the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador dated December 1986 identified Crockett and a dozen other congressmen as sponsors of Medical Aid for El Salvador, which collects funds for "social projects" in Salvadoran zones "liberated" by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), the principal Cuban-supported umbrella group for Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador. This influx of cash frees up FMLN funds for more weapons to be used in their campaign of terror. In August 1985, Medical Aid for El Salvador sent a team to San Salvador to perform surgery on Nidia Diaz, a leader of the FMLN faction that had killed four U.S. Marine Embassy guards the previous June.

Also named as sponsors of the group were Reps. John Conyers, George Brown, Ronald Dellums, Julian Dixon, Mervyn Dymally, Thomas Foglietta, Robert Garcia, Mickey Leland, Parren Mitchell, Pete Stark, Bruce Vento, and Sen. Tom Harkin. Both Dymally and Garcia serve on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Foglietta and Dellums are on Armed Services, Dixon is on Foreign Operations, and Conyers serves on Government Operations, all influential and sensitive posts. In a section explaining the "interlocking relationship of various front groups," the U.S. cable says that the activities of Medical Aid for El Salvador are coordinated by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, a "KGB active measure." The cable also noted that a fundraising request for another "FMLN support activity," the U.S. group New El Salvador Today, was signed by Conyers. Conyers, Dellums, and Dymally hosted a Washington reception for the group in July 1986.

Rep. Patricia Schroeder, a ranking Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, has been a fundraiser and advisory board member of the Nicaraguan Network, a U.S.-based Sandinista "solidarity committee" with close ties to Cuba's intelligence service. The network has sent hundreds of American volunteers to work and possibly fight for the Sandinista government. According to a report in the *Washington Times*, Schroeder's network activities were coordinated by a paid aide in her Denver office, Sister Agnes Ann Schum, the Rocky Mountain regional director of the Nicaraguan Network and a national board member. (Schum was removed from Schroeder's payroll in December after the arrangement was reported in the local press.) One Network letter signed by Schroeder said, "If you can afford a gift of \$200 or more and want a tax deduction, please join me as a sponsor

of the Nicaraguan Network . . ." But according to IRS records, the Nicaraguan Network has never been granted tax-exempt status. Lately, Schroeder has been talking about running for President.

The Nicaraguan Network and Medical Aid for El Salvador are but two of dozens of private groups raising money for the Sandinistas or the Communist guerrillas in El Salvador. In April, thirty-five organizations that claim to have raised over \$30 million for the Sandinista regime convened a National Mobilization day in Washington and San Francisco. Their current goal is to raise another \$100 million to offset U.S. aid to the contras. The Mobilization was formed in the late 1970s with the

Major Owens, Barbara Kennelly, and Bruce Morrison. Other House members, like Sam Gejdenson of Foreign Affairs, Peter Kostmayer, and Bonior, regularly lend their names to reports from groups like the Washington Office on Latin America and the Council for Hemispheric Affairs concerning alleged "human rights" violations by the government of El Salvador and the contras. These groups regularly overlook the widespread abuses of the Communist regimes in Nicaragua and Cuba.

Some legislators have gotten more personally involved. In the Senate, the Sandinista cause has been well

George Crockett, chairman of the House Western Hemisphere subcommittee, has a long history of associating with the U.S. Communist Party.

help of the Soviet World Peace Council. At the demonstration, a large contingent of Communist Party members marched openly under CPUSA banners. Others carried the banners of the Pledge of Resistance, Witness for Peace, and various inter-religious groups involved in the sanctuary movement to harbor illegal immigrants from Central America.

Before the Mobilization day convened, John T. Joyce of the Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen union warned his members that "anyone who knows or remembers the popular fronts put together by the Communists in the 1930s will know precisely how the April mobilization works and what it is all about." Apparently several members of Congress could use a refresher course in history. The roster of speakers at the event included Democratic congressmen David Bonior, John Conyers, and Ted Weiss, D.C. Delegate Walter Fauntroy and Lynn Cutler, vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee. A written endorsement came from Sen. Claiborne Pell, the new chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Another Democratic presidential contender, Sen. Paul Simon, recently endorsed the Campaign for a People's Peace Treaty, an initiative of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, Inc. According to a State Department report, "The Soviet Union, through the CPUSA, provides funding for NCASF operations." In 1985, Rep. Charles Hayes led a workshop at a U.S. Peace Council Conference, an affiliate of the Soviet World Peace Council. Telegrams of support for the conference came from Reps.

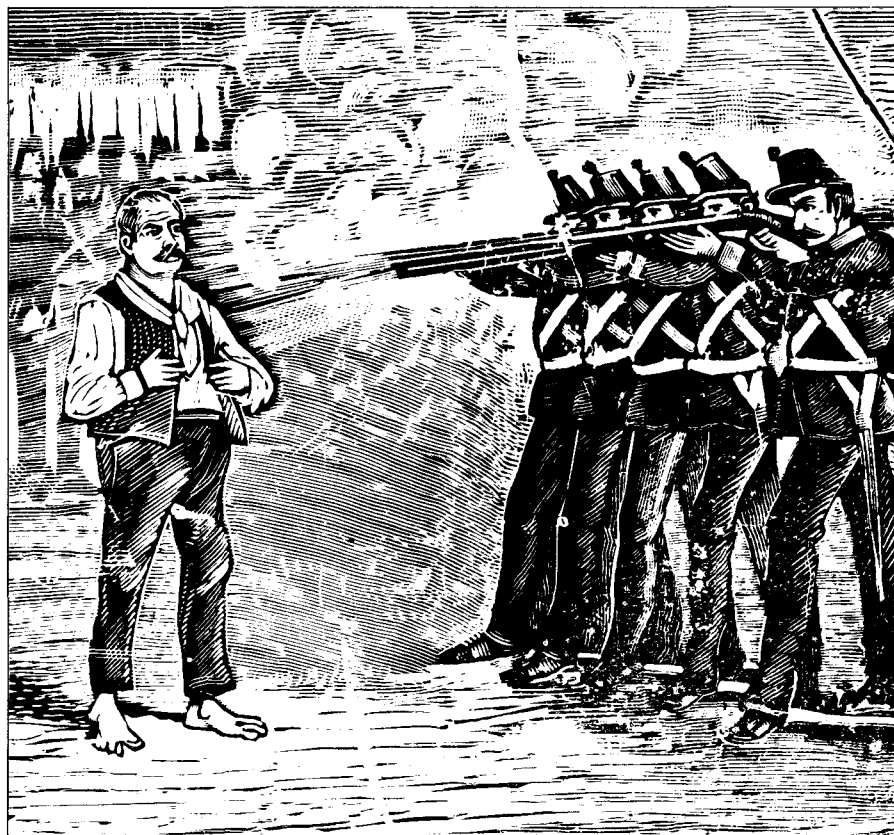
served by Senators Harkin and John Kerry, who traveled to Managua shortly after both were elected in 1984. The pair met with Daniel Ortega and returned to Washington carrying the message that Ortega was willing to consider a cease-fire—on his own terms, of course.

Kerry's obsessive campaign against the contras often has exceeded the bounds of propriety. Officials of the FBI have charged that Kerry staffers, in their efforts to discredit the contras, have interfered with a major FBI narcotics investigation. In one case, Kerry staffers took an FBI informant from Miami to Massachusetts to question

her about the contras; the spooked informant stopped cooperating with the FBI. The Kerry staffers were looking for information to include in a report Kerry released on alleged contra drug smuggling activities last October. In compiling the report, Kerry's aides used tactics that other Capitol Hill investigators have criticized, including writing private checks to pay legal fees for their sources, posting their bond, and offering witnesses other financial incentives.

Some of these payments were funneled through the International Center for Development Policy, headed by Robert White, President Carter's ambassador to El Salvador. The center's literature says it has paid for "witness travel to Washington to meet with House and Senate investigators. And the center is also funding [Kerry] staff expenses for work outside Washington." The *Washington Times* has reported that one former Kerry aide, Ron Rosenblith, wrote a \$2,000 personal check to a witness to pay the legal fees of Steven Carr, a Florida mercenary. (Rosenblith is now the executive director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.) After being told not to cash the Rosenblith check, Carr's attorney was given a \$2,000 check drawn on the International Center for Development Policy. In addition, Kerry's endorsement has been used in fundraising materials for the center.

John Hull, a Costa Rican rancher who supports the contras, summed it up best when he wrote in a complaint to the Senate Ethics Committee that Kerry's staff "came down here and offered aid, influence and money to get the kind of testimony he wanted—false



testimony." It is a peculiar twist of fate that Hull's charges against Kerry will not likely be pursued. In the wake of this country's last orgy of self-flagellation in the mid-1970s, Congress disbanded the last of the congressional committees charged with internal security and the FBI shut down its domestic investigations unit, gutting the government's domestic counter-intelligence capacity. The practical effect has been the government's inability to investigate pro-Communist activities on the part of American citizens, including public officials. Today, national security charges against public officials can go only to the post-Watergate ethics committees, which deal vigorously with drunk driving but shy away from graver matters.

The Democrats' scandal even has its own cover-ups. In 1982, an ethics complaint was lodged against Representative Dellums for allowing Grenada's government—under Marxist Maurice Bishop—to review a draft of Dellums's Armed Services subcommittee report on the Point Salines airfield in Grenada. Dellums had been assigned to determine the airfield's purpose, military or commercial. He omitted evidence that the Soviets and the Cubans had supported the project financially. After Bishop's review, Dellums issued a report concluding that "nothing being done in Grenada constitutes a threat to the U.S. or her allies." The ethics committee never investigated the matter.

In 1981, Romesh Chandra, then the chairman of the World Peace Council, was hosted on Capitol Hill by a group of Democratic congressmen. In 1982, Rep. Edward Boland, then the chair-

man of the House Intelligence Committee and the author of the much-vaunted anti-contra Boland Amendment, released a report on Soviet active measures in the U.S. While the Boland report mentioned the Chandra visit, no note was made of his dealings with members of Congress. Allan C. Brownfeld and J. Michael Waller report in the book *The Revolution Lobby* that "Boland's staff allowed some of the evidence to be doctored to prevent the

The practical effect has been the government's inability to investigate pro-Communist activities on the part of American . . . public officials.

public from knowing of the collaboration of some Democratic congressmen and the Soviet World Peace Council."

The Iran-contra scandal, and the other side of the coin, the Democrats' scandal detailed here, are of course part of a struggle since at least the Vietnam war between the executive and legislative branches over primacy in foreign policy making. The legislative branch, even before the presidency was wounded by the current round of show trials, was winning the battle. Dodd, Kerry, and Harkin are the tip of the iceberg. The number of globe-trotting, self-appointed congressional "ambassadors" has been on the rise in recent years, and the net effect of their missions is almost always detrimental to U.S. interests.

Look, for example, at some of the personal diplomacy undertaken so far

this year. On a trip to the Philippines in January, Rep. Stephen Solarz, head of the House subcommittee on Asia and Pacific Affairs, took it upon himself to become the first American official to meet with the leaders of the Communist New People's Army, a gang whose murderous *modus operandi* closely parallels that of Pol Pot. Solarz says the meeting was meant to be "off the record," but soon after it broke up, the NPA, delighted that

Solarz had conferred legitimacy on their movement, spread the word. In April, House Speaker Jim Wright led a congressional delegation to the Soviet Union, only to be confronted with a suggestion by General Secretary Gorbachev that the United States create separate living areas for blacks to solve its racial problem. While the other delegation members protested, Wright maintained that Gorbachev had been "misinterpreted." Wright did not want anything to stand in the way of what he called the "new attitude" of the Soviet leadership, or of an arms control pact. Even though the Constitution explicitly denies the House any role in the formation of treaties, upon his return Wright successfully tacked on to an appropriations bill a requirement that Reagan comply with the unratified SALT II treaty. Perhaps the ultimate congressional power grab was in May, when Sen. Jim Sasser dispatched himself to tour the Persian Gulf after an Iraqi plane shot up an American frigate. Sasser was making public statements even as the U.S. government's fact-finding team was arriving on the scene.

These free-lance forays raise serious ethical and legal questions. When Wright and nine of his Democratic colleagues (including Boland, Solarz, and Lee Hamilton) penned the infamous "Dear Comandante" letter to Daniel Ortega in 1984 applauding his steps to "open up the political process," an enraged Rep. Newt Gingrich called for a congressional inquiry. "This letter clearly violates the constitutional separation of powers. It's at best unwise, at worst illegal."

During the Iran-contra hearings, Lee Hamilton, who chairs the House Intelligence Committee, observed that the "privatization of foreign policy is a prescription for confusion and failure. The use of private parties to carry out the high purposes of government makes us the subject of puzzlement and ridicule." Hamilton has asked

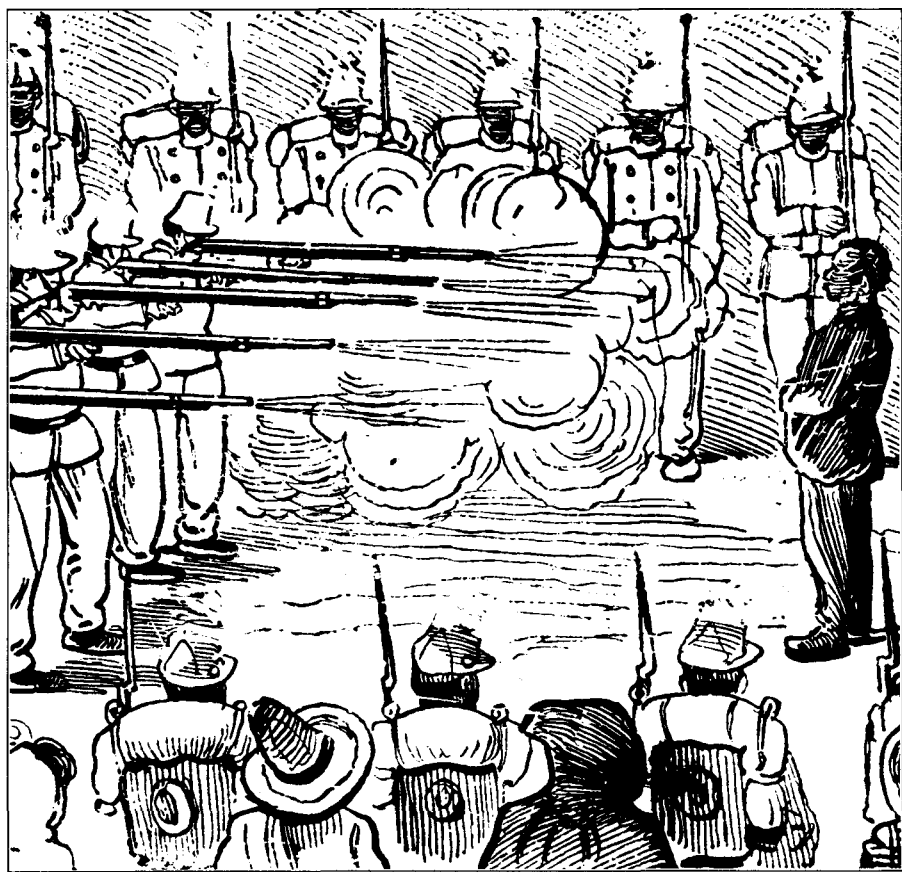
some tough, and justifiable, questions of the Administration in these past weeks. But these same questions ought to be aimed at the Democrats and their pro-Communist Central America network. Why must contra supporters like Ellen Garwood be cross-examined by Congress when the fundraisers for the Sandinistas or the Salvadoran guerrillas go unidentified and unquestioned? If an effort by U.S. officials to keep the contras going constitutes a "conspiracy," why not find out if the congressmen who aid the groups sending Americans to Nicaragua to work for the Sandinistas are conspiring to break any laws? What is the legal status of the Nicaraguan Network or Medical Aid for El Salvador or U.S. Out of Central America, all of which send money and supplies to the Sandinistas or the FMLN? Have they violated the Foreign Agents Registration Act? Finally, why is it legal (even though the Constitution says otherwise) for individual members of Congress to conduct their own foreign policies but illegal for the President to conduct his?

None of these questions is likely to be answered, or even posed, for several reasons. The first is that the Administration has not presented a coherent case in defense of its policies. The "law" which the Administration's prosecutors say was broken was unconstitutional when passed; the Boland Amendment trespasses on the President's constitutional prerogatives to act in foreign policy. The only charge of which the Administration is guilty is that it by-passed unconstitutional congressional restrictions in an effort to prevent the consolidation of another Soviet-backed Communist government in our hemisphere.

The second reason is that inquisitions are reserved exclusively for use against the executive. Congress does not investigate itself nor allow anyone else to investigate it.

The final reason is that all of these scandals boil down to subjective questions of politics and morality, not to objective ones of legality. And those who have the power to define what makes for a hot Washington scandal have never been on the side of the small-d democrats. (Compare, say, the number of news columns devoted to the CIA's "illicit" activities in Central America to reports of activities of the KGB.)

This summer's inquisition, playing as scripted, will surely brand Ollie North & Co., the anti-Communists, as scoundrels or worse. And the subterranean activities of the apologists for Communism will surely continue with impunity, until they ultimately triumph. □



Malcolm Gladwell

THE FIBER OPTIC REVOLUTION

In Cerritos, California, the future is now.

On February 4 of this year, the future came to Cerritos, California. GTE, the telecommunications giant, and Apollo Cablevision, a local cable operator, were granted separate franchises by the city to build and operate the first fiber optic community cable television facility in the country. It's an ambitious plan. Fiber optic technology has revolutionized long distance telecommunications, but no one has yet mastered the challenges of bringing it to the residential market. "We're going to need all kinds of new facilities, all kinds of new research. Nobody's ever built the kind of cable that we need to put into this system," says Tom Robak, head of Apollo Cablevision. But if it works, and GTE officials speak only in terms of when, Cerritos will be quite unlike any other city in the world.

Fiber optic carries ten to a hundred times more information than does conventional copper wire. One strand can deliver all voice, video, and data transmissions to the home, including a host of services in addition to cable TV that leaves the telecommunications industry practically breathless: home banking, home shopping, home security, videotext, automatic meter reading, interactive video services, and on and on.

It is not difficult to see who will profit from the advent of fiber. The citizens of Cerritos, of course, will have an array of information service options never before seen. But the big winner is Apollo Cablevision. As a telephone company, GTE is permitted by law only to own and manage telecommunications networks, not provide any of the information services that use them. That means Apollo gets to market everything that comes with the fiber, an opportunity that Robak sees as critical to the economic health of his cable company.

There are strong indications, for ex-

ample, that in the near future cable programmers like HBO will want to beam their movies directly to individual homes, bypassing local cable operators entirely. Already HBO has moved its satellite transmission onto a more powerful band, and awaits only the high volume production of cheaper, smaller, home satellite dishes. And if HBO goes, who will follow? "We've got to have new products," says Robak of his own operation and those of his fellow cable operators. "We've got to have home shopping, home security, home banking, the ability to link up with mainframes. We've got to add all those home services so we can keep our customers on basic cable. If we don't make a change, we'll be out of business in five years. That's why I'm working with GTE."

Even if the fiber optic experiment in Cerritos fails, GTE is also building a state of the art cable network using the

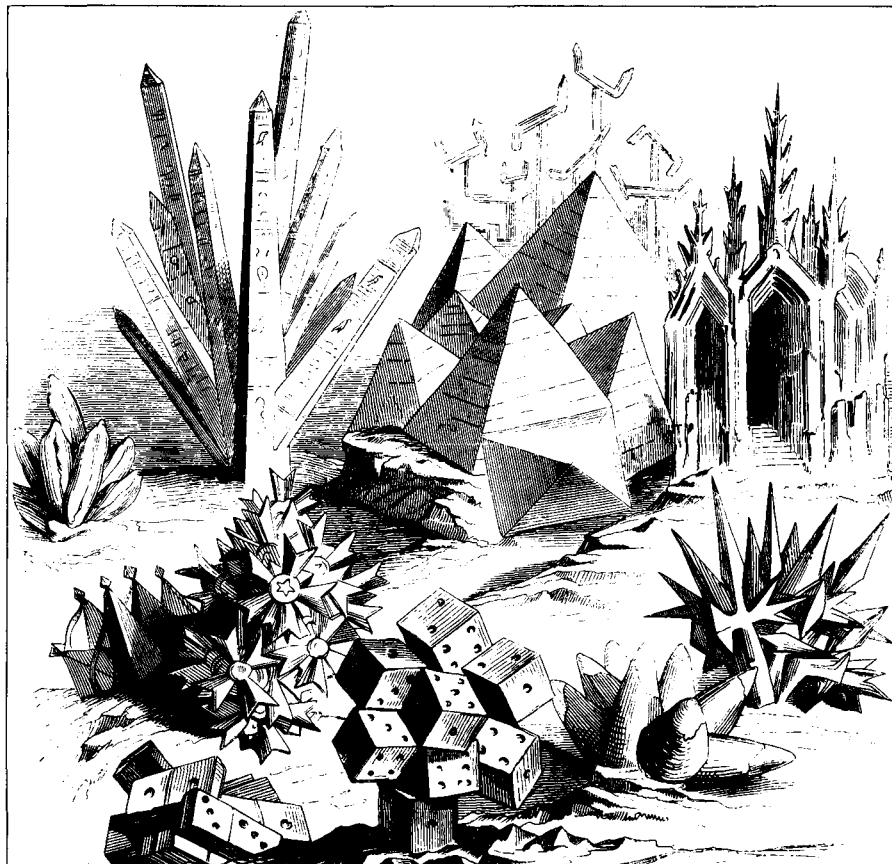
conventional coaxial cable that will also be able to provide many of the services that come with fiber. Chief among them is something it calls video on demand, an innovation that allows any cable customer to call up at any time any number of 3,000 movies from the cable operator for immediate viewing in the home. If the biggest threat to cable television right now is the rise of the VCR and home movie rental, GTE has an answer. "Cities want more services, more channels, but a lot of cable companies don't want to spend money to upgrade their systems or do new research," says one operator. "We've been deregulated. We're in a cash flow mode." Not GTE. "We're trying to make Apollo the leading cable company in the country," says Tom Gillet, director of the Cerritos project. "It seems to me that if I were a cable operator I'd really want to know about these things, because if we can do it

for Apollo we can do it for anyone."

But the cable TV industry is a strange beast, and what should be done in the industry's best interest is not always what is done. Bizarre as it may seem, when GTE asked the FCC for permission to go ahead with the Cerritos experiment back in February, both the California Cable TV Association and the industry's Washington lobby, the National Cable TV Association, immediately filed objections with the FCC to block the project. Gillet says that when he first filed with the FCC, he sent a personal letter to James Mooney, president of the NCTA, saying, "I'm certain you'll find this of interest, and I'd love to chat with you about it and answer any questions you might have." Mooney never responded, and his association's lawyers speak darkly of the threat posed by GTE.

Meanwhile out in California, Robak says that the vehemence of the reaction to his deal with GTE has left him wondering whether he'll end up as the industry's leader or its Benedict Arnold. "All kinds of cable companies are calling me up and asking me, 'What are you doing, why are you letting me down?'"

The problem, according to cable operators, is that GTE is a telephone company, and they don't like telephone companies. What they say they fear is that if GTE enters the cable industry, it will use its enormous revenues from other activities to subsidize its television activities, and might also eventually erase the distinction between what it is allowed to do—transmit programming—and what it cannot do—generate programming. Whenever telephone companies of any sort have proposed to get involved in building cable networks, in fact, the NCTA has kicked up a fuss, and in that sense the Cerritos objection—with its painstaking analysis of the circumstances of the Apollo-GTE relationship, the possibility of a



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debtor-creditor relationship, the investment estimable table, and pages more of fine-tooth combing—is nothing new.

The fact is, though, that none of these reasons is sufficient to explain why the NCTA would try to stop technological developments that are so clearly in its best interest. The FCC has all kinds of complicated accounting procedures guarding against cross-ownership, and there is a law on the books which no one is about to change that makes it impossible for phone companies to sell video signals. Forget the financial nitpicking of the FCC filing. The real reason the cable industry doesn't like the Cerritos experiment is that in Cerritos GTE is laying fiber optic, and fiber turns the threat of competition from a theoretical possibility into a reality.

Fiber makes cable television available to everyone with a telephone, not just everyone with a special cable hook-up, which opens the door for some very easy competition with the existing cable industry. Anyone can come in and give access to every home without having to invest in outside plant or maintenance. And any operator bringing his TV programming over fiber has a sharper picture, and a far more attractive cable package. Fiber will quite simply spell the end of the comfortable monopoly many cable franchise holders enjoy in cable markets. "Let's say that GTE decided to provide these services to not one entity but many entities," says a cable spokesman, explaining his industry's fears. "And let's say they start offering them to people irrespective of whether they had a franchise or not."

Ideally, cable operators could, like Robak, jump in and switch to fiber optic themselves. But that is not about to happen given the industry's commitment to existing, conventional coaxial networks. "Sure there are inherent limitations in the existing cable networks," says Bob Strock, a Washington-based telecommunications consultant. "But cable operators have got a huge investment, about \$12 billion, in that plant, and that's cash flow for them in the form of depreciation. They're not particularly anxious to have that replaced with something else."

Given a choice, in other words, between their short-term economic self-interest and the future, between their money and their life, cable operators have opted for their money. For anyone who has followed the history of the industry, this decision does not come as a surprise. Cable operators have always had far more invested in the hardware of their trade than in what is called, in the industry, the software—the actual programming and cable information

services. That's where their true interest has been, and when push has come to shove, software has always been the loser.

The whole concept of two-way cable communication, for example, is actually possible with conventional coaxial as well, and was an integral part of many of the promises made by cable franchise applicants in the seventies. But the cable industry was never serious about it. A few years ago the president of the country's largest cable operator, TCI, admitted that two-way "has been a franchising tool and a promotional gimmick for twelve years," carried out

The real reason the cable industry doesn't like the Cerritos experiment is that fiber optic turns the threat of competition from a theoretical possibility into a reality.

only "to get things through the FCC." In fact, he said, he was "totally opposed" to two-way systems on the grounds that they were financially burdensome and unnecessary. In the seventies, you'll recall, it was cable operators who went around promising that their industry would liberate America from the programming tyranny of the networks.¹

There is cynicism here, tight-fistedness, the complacency of the monopolist, and beneath it all is the simple fact that this is an industry defined overwhelmingly by its capital investment. The glittering promise of GTE's cable innovations and fiber optic information services means no more to them than the potential of their medium has ever meant. "It's a guard-dog mentality," says one cable operator of the Cerritos action. "The NCTA has been trained and taught to make sure that the phone companies or anybody that comes into our yard gets bit."

Ten years from now, the objections of the NCTA will not have amounted to much. There seems little doubt about the ultimate inevitability of the fiber optic revolution. "There are still some hurdles to be overcome right now," says Gillet, "but things are coming so fast right now it's incredible. For anyone to believe that coaxial, which has been around for so long, is going to be able to stand up to fiber over the long haul is simply naive." But it would be wrong to think that cable is powerless in delaying or at least distorting the development of fiber. Cerritos is neither the first nor the most important obstacle the cable industry has

¹See my article, "Ted Turner's Cable Scam," in the March 1987 *TAS*.

erected to the future of telecommunications. In the past few months the industry has even shown a willingness to back away from its formal commitment to First Amendment protection as a means of protecting itself from the threat of competition.

This is, by any measure, a dramatic shift. Ever since the cable boom began ten years ago, operators have successfully fought regulation at every turn by insisting that they have more in common with the print media than with broadcasters, and as "electronic publishers" are due the full protection of the First Amendment. In 1985 the cable

industry got the Supreme Court to strike down the so-called must carry rules, which required cable operators to carry all local broadcast stations on their cable systems. In April, the Supreme Court struck down a Utah law that prevented cable operators from showing what it termed "indecent" programming. In other cases, the NCTA has argued that local regulations that specifically set aside a number of channels for public access broadcasting are unconstitutional. For years the cable industry has stood firm on this point. As a lawyer for the NCTA puts it: "What is at stake here is the cable operator's right to control what he provides to his customers. If a government required a newspaper to publish ten pages of letters to the editor, you could be sure the publisher would have objections."

The cable industry, in fact, has extended the constitutional battle to the detailed conditions attached to franchise agreements, from franchise fees to public access channels, and even to the notion that a city has the right to grant an exclusive cable franchise at all. This was true even up to last summer, when a struggle over a franchise granted by the city of Los Angeles went all the way to the Supreme Court. In recent months, however, a number of cable operators have started to back away from an absolutist position on the First Amendment. Considering the size and diversity of the industry, it's a startling development that, as it gains momentum, is increasingly reflected in the continuous give and take, lobbying and litigation, between governing bodies and private operators.

Steve Effros, president of another of the industry's lobbies, the Community Antenna Television Association, insists that this movement doesn't mean

that cable is giving up its rights to free expression. But, he says, "being a First Amendment speaker and being a litigator who uses any opportunity to eliminate regulations on the claim of First Amendment privilege are two very different things." For Effros, backing away from constitutional challenges to municipal regulation is simply good politics: "There are many good reasons why some of these rules and regulations should be adhered to regardless of their infirmity under the First Amendment. Public access channels are a good example. We may be able to win the case against them but do we really want to? . . . We have political and business obligations that must be weighed in any equation regarding existing laws."

It is possible to look on this development as evidence of a new maturity in the cable industry. Certainly it makes a welcome end to the feuding that has marked the relationship between cable operators and the cities that oversee them. But in another sense, there's something disturbing about it. After all, the cable industry's war against local regulations on First Amendment grounds has always been, in many respects, entirely justified. In St. Louis the mayor boasted that part of the price for getting the local cable franchise was providing the funds necessary to reopen a municipal hospital. In Sacramento, it took a promise to plant twenty thousand trees for an applicant to win a cable franchise approval. To get a franchise in Washington, D.C., District Cablevision, Inc. had to promise to provide \$15 million in seed money for a public access TV corporation, no less than eight municipal channels and another eight public access channels in each of the city's eight wards, \$180,000 annually in scholarship education funds, a \$5-million grant to purchase equipment for municipal programming, and another \$1-million general training grant. Cable has been quite simply the only new source of graft in municipal government in forty years, and there's no question that the ludicrous conditions attached to franchises by cities posed a potential threat to the development of cable systems and the free expression of cable operators.

But now the cable industry has given up on this good fight, having decided that the status quo isn't so bad and that it can live with existing regulation. It's a cynical calculation. What the industry realized is that the constitutional challenge to the city's rights in granting a cable franchise, logically extended, also means the end to the city's right to guarantee a monopoly to its franchise holder. The industry sold its First Amendment birthright for a lit-

the security. According to one NCTA board member: "The question is whether the cost savings of no access [channel requirements], no franchise fees, etc. is worth creating a legal doctrine under which others can force their way into your franchise area."

The consequences for the future of fiber optic are clear, for it is the fiber optic people who, more than anyone else, would like someday to force their

way into the franchise areas of the country. If cable operators can prevent anyone else from shipping video signals into the home, the growth of fiber will be severely retarded. Fiber needs TV transmission, not simply for the revenue this would provide to finance the laying of the cable, but also to make its total information service package attractive to consumers.

The situation is not yet critical. Fiber

optic technology is still very much in its infancy. It is entirely possible, as well, that nothing much more will come of the matter. Perhaps GTE and Apollo Cablevision will find that the people of Cerritos don't want interactive video, multiple channels, and mainframe hookups. Perhaps people don't want to include their homes in the high-tech revolution. But even if that is true—and there is little

reason to believe that it is—there is a principle involved in the Cerritos affair that dwarfs all other considerations. By playing the regulatory game in Washington and by debasing their own constitutional privileges, the cable industry is attempting to thwart a legitimate competitor. It is not for them to decide whether the future will come to Cerritos, California. □

Matthew Stevenson

THE PLAYING FIELDS OF TERRORISM

Welcome to Jordan and the West Bank.

The journey to the frontier between Jordan and Israel began on the runway at the Athens airport, brushed as it is by gentle sea breezes of the Saronic Gulf and a terrorist past. Passengers for Amman, before boarding, were asked to point to their luggage, which was scattered beside the boarding stairs. Only then was it loaded into the fuselage. A matter of caution, perhaps, but it was a fitting introduction to the fatalism of the Middle East: the exercise didn't insure that there wasn't a bomb on board—only that, if there were, its courier would go aloft with the suitcase.

Royal Jordanian flight #132 avoided a direct route to Amman, which would have meant flying over Israel, and flew a long arc over the dry riverbeds of southern Turkey and Syria. Approached in the half-light of dusk, the Jordanian desert reflected a gray, lunar complexion. Seemingly the plane could have set down anywhere in this wasteland and rolled the last fifty miles to the terminal, which appeared first as a winking electronic oasis and later as a Potemkin village.

Like so much else in Jordan, the \$85 million Queen Alya International airport was paid for with Saudi petrodollars. Completed in 1983, before traffic warranted a field the size of that serving Houston, it was intended to mark Jordan's accession to the front rank of Middle East nations. Late that afternoon, however, the linoleum cor-

ridors from the arrival gate echoed the loneliness of footsteps in a mall where the shops are closed. The unused baggage carousels gave the impression that only ghost flights had landed. And the grand concourse—Jordan's gateway arch—had more portraits of King Hussein than arriving passengers.

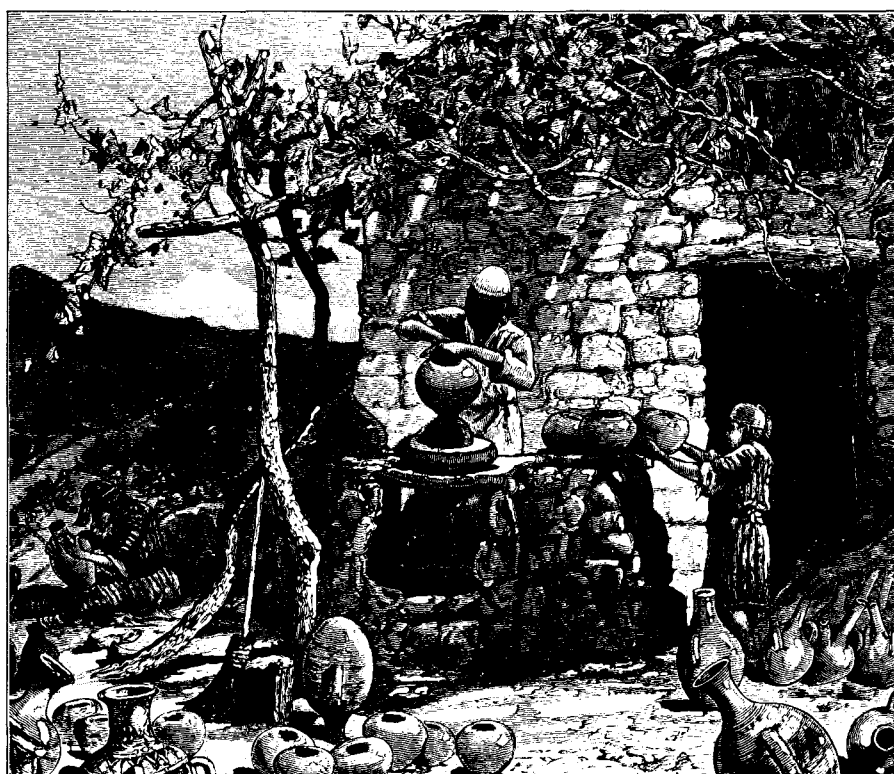
My trip coincided with a number of events that, when recalled as one, fix the image of the Middle East as the Balkans of the late twentieth century. While I was there and after: Israel launched an air raid against the Palestinian Liberation Organization in Tunisia, in retaliation for Israeli yachtsmen

killed on Cyprus; Palestinian gunmen hijacked a cruise ship, threw an American invalid overboard, and then escaped the fate of pirates by disappearing into the Italian judiciary; an Egyptian policeman opened fire with a machine gun on Israelis sunbathing at Taba, the disputed beach on the Gulf of Aqaba, and more than a month passed before official condolences were received in Jerusalem; Vice President George Bush conducted a political barnstorm through Jordan, Israel, and Egypt, as though each were a primary state on Super Tuesday; American hostages, seized in Beirut, were released

in Syria after President Reagan authorized an Israeli agent to deliver weapons to Iran, fighting a seven-year war with Iraq, the ally of our allies in the region; and, after being the object of thrown rocks, the Israeli military on the West Bank shot more than a dozen Palestinian demonstrators, killing two.

Rather than interpret actions that, in history, may read like the intrigue that preceded Sarajevo, I decided to visit the land that, in my mind, lies at the heart of the Middle East conflict: the West Bank and Jordan Valley. On the East Bank of the Jordan River, in Jordan, are many of the Palestinian refugees from the Arab wars against Israel. Occupied by Israel since 1967, the West Bank is a kaleidoscope of Palestinian villages and, lately, Jewish settlements. In either land it is possible from many of the hilltops to look down on the spires of Jerusalem, a city whose divisions are a tapestry of the conflict.

To my surprise, as an American I was welcome at Palestinian refugee camps and Israeli settlements, and was free to cross the Jordan at the Allenby Bridge. In New York, before leaving, I had collected several names of Jordanians and Israelis, but otherwise went with an open itinerary. I left, however, with the despair that is the region's most freely traded commodity. As if in a time warp, I felt I had visited Europe during a feudal period, when countries were forming and wars were fought over religious questions or village squares. My impression of the Middle East was that it was in the early stages of a hundred years war. Nor was there



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any urgency to finding solutions to the problems. It reminded me of the Austro-Hungarian Balkan policy at the turn of the century, the preference to "muddle through"—even if a small act of violence, an assassination, perhaps, eventually has larger consequences.

The international symbol of squalor—corrugated tin roofing—interrupts the Irbid road north of Amman. Behind cement walls, wire, and halcyons of fluttering laundry, as if part of some landlocked fleet, rows of cinder-block houses give shape to a restricted town. The main gate is a dusty intersection where trucks, buses, Mercedes taxis, and pushcarts jostle with the pedestrians drawn to such commotion.

This is Baqa'a—a Palestinian refugee camp. Even though Jordan is sparsely populated, and some of the rocky hills give way to expansive farmland, the camp is crowded into an area not much larger than the playing fields of an American high school. A satellite of the United Nations refugee constellation, it began in 1967 as a tent camp, with a few central spigots for water; later came the block housing, electricity, and the open sewer that snakes through the side streets and alleys.

I found the camp's director, Mr. Alfattah Wheidi, in a tin shack, seated behind a plain wooden desk. A dark-haired man in his late forties, he was wearing sun glasses, a light cotton suit, and an expression as impassive as the drab olive paint on the walls. As testimony to the far-reaching adaptability of bureaucracy, his desk had an in-box, a black rotary telephone, and several neat stacks of paper. While talking with the camp administrators, he motioned for me to sit in a wooden chair against the long wall in his office.

Adjacent was a large blackboard that kept the camp's daily ledger. That particular morning 65,370 people were living at Baqa'a, which broke down to 9,091 families living in 7,650 dwellings or about eight to each family and house. Three of every four houses had a toilet. The roster listed seven doctors and 186 teachers on duty, and reported 240 cases treated the day before at the clinic. Seventy-one sanitation workers picked up the garbage, and there were seventy-six water points with 242 taps. One thousand six hundred fifty refugees were eating in one of the camp's three feeding centers, as they were called. Each month 3,200 rations of dry milk were issued to children under the age of three. No epidemics were present.

After his meeting broke up, Mr. Wheidi talked of the symbolism expressed by camp life. The Arab refugees from the 1948 war with Israel first set-

tled in the West Bank, but were pushed east again in 1967. Jordan had offered citizenship to the refugees and the opportunity to assimilate into the culture, and while some did, most clung to the camps—their only link with towns and villages in Israel. The refugees were free to come and go as they pleased, and many commuted to Amman. But most of these families maintained a camp residence, because it was temporary, because one day they would be going

charge would ever go on to a university. Many of the girls would leave school to have babies. It was a future she was trying to change.

She spoke about the United States with an ambivalence that I heard often in the Middle East. She admired its open society—both she and Mr. Wheidi asked to be sent magazines and books—but she saw its politics only as an extension of Israel's. It was a lesson she intended to pass on to her students.

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home. Dreary as it might be, Baqa'a was Paradise Lost.

Escorted by a squadron of flies and several small, darting boys, one of whom wore a Houston Astros T-shirt, we walked to a school, a soup kitchen, and a clinic. The open sewer festered under the high sun. A bazaar that choked the main streets filled the air with dust. And at the clinic the head doctor said that while, in general, the health of the refugees was good, such social problems as teenage pregnancy were devastating. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to etch Baqa'a in terms that evoke Calcutta or the slums of Rio.

At Baqa'a Preparatory School No. 2, the schoolgirls lined up for morning exercises, frolicked at recess, and filed reluctantly, like all students, into their classrooms. The school resembled a field warehouse, and the girls had their heads covered with flowing, Arabic headaddresses. The principal, Mrs. Ayshed Diab, spoke excellent English, something she was trying to pass along to various sixth-grade classes. Graceful and determined, she displayed the qualities of patience, leadership, and good humor that I remember from the best of my own teachers. She knew each girl by name and when we talked—first in her office and later in class—she would interrupt the conversation to revise a lesson plan with another teacher or to restore order in the schoolyard.

Like Henry Adams, she spoke of life as a political education. It disturbed her that the classes, on average, had fifty pupils. Moreover, her students had neither pencils nor paper, which disappeared from the supply trucks after the 1982 war in Lebanon. She suspected supplies were short because of cuts in American aid, but all she knew for sure was that her students had to learn by repetition. Homework, sadly, was an abstract concept. Only a few of the thousands that passed through her

"I want them to know," she said, "how Israel stole their land. I want them to know that one day they will return." On this point she was inflexible, as only a principal can be.

On the walk back to the office, Mr. Wheidi and I stopped at the house where, a week before, Margaret Thatcher had paid a visit during her own tour at Baqa'a. It had given this family with nine children, living in several concrete rooms, fleeting celebrity status. Later we passed a vacant lot where goals for soccer were set up at either end. Some of the smaller boys were chasing a ball while the older ones milled about on the sidelines—of what another British prime minister might have described as the playing fields of terrorism.

The house of Laila Sharaf, until recently Jordan's minister of information, straddles a ridge that overlooks Baqa'a. From her back lawn the camp spreads out as a desert labyrinth—with the streets showing up as tunnels through the maze and the perimeter as an ancient rampart.

A striking woman in her forties, with coiffed black hair and an elegant bearing, she spoke about the Palestinians from the perspective of an Arab who has lived in the United States. During the 1970s her husband had represented Jordan at the United Nations—a diplomatic life recorded by the pictures around the house. After his death cut short a promising political career, she served in the Jordanian government until she resigned over a difference in policy—by all accounts, an act of considerable courage.

When living in the United States, she had found it impossible even to discuss the question of the Palestinians. Not only did she encounter prejudice against Arabs, but Palestinians were seen only in the veil of terrorism. At public meetings whenever she spoke on the issue, she was reminded of the

Holocaust. "Why," she asked, "should the Palestinians alone bear the guilt for this tragedy?"

She questioned the ability of the United States to serve the region as an honest broker. In the Kissinger shuttle missions and at Camp David, the U.S. had cast itself as a disinterested party, yet she believed the peace that it offered implied sympathy for the Israeli position.

"What's mine is mine, and what's yours is negotiable," is how she summarized the various Israeli peace initiatives. She cited the example of Jerusalem, which Israel annexed after the 1967 war. The Arab claim to the city "was not even up for negotiation." Further, on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Israel was strengthening its occupation through the settlements and not searching for compromise solutions, such as those offered by the various U.N. resolutions.

"What's left for us to concede?" she asked.

She resented the American fascination with the phrase that Israel had "made the deserts bloom." To her it dismissed the achievements of the Palestinians or their claim to Palestine. It implied that the land was barren prior to the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and the immigration of the Jews.

She explained why she believed Americans had such a difficult time understanding the demands of the Palestinians. Americans were happy living anywhere, she remembered. Yes, hometowns were important, but usually for mythic beginnings. Nobody in the United States dreamed of spending their life where they were born. But, she said, Palestinians were rooted to small parcels of land, most of which were now inaccessible in either Israel or the West Bank. The ancient towns, like Jaffa or Nazareth, were just as important to Arabs as to Jews, and the various national and religious claims to Jerusalem were duplicated throughout Palestine. Much of the anger stemmed from the inability to go home.

She neither avoided the subject of terrorism nor condoned it. It was endemic to the region, she believed. She recalled the tactics of Menachem Begin's Irgun Zvai Leumi and other groups, but said the only hope for peace was through a Geneva convention, attended by all the powers, including the Soviet Union. It had the ability to wreck any settlement so it ought to be party to any agreement. But she thought it doubtful that the United States or Israel would ever agree to such a concord, at which the Palestinians would have to speak for themselves.

On leaving, I asked if Palestinians and Israelis ever got together informally, away from the headlines, and talked

quietly about the land they divided. No, she said quickly, that never happened. She remembered the time she and her husband were invited to watch the launch at Cape Kennedy of Apollo 9. As they stood waiting for the lift-off, she pointed out to her husband that the Indian and Pakistani ambassadors, also invited to the occasion, were clearly enjoying each other's company. When Mrs. Sharaf said to her husband that she could not imagine such a scene between Arab and Jew, he answered: "Not everyone's as crazy as we are."

I met Fawzi Daoud, a member of Jordan's parliament, in the lobby of the Amra Forum Hotel, located off what in Amman is called the Seventh Circle. He wore a sports jacket, gray slacks, and had his necktie loosened in end-of-the-day fashion. Like most Palestinians, his hair and complexion were dark, and his trimmed beard recalled sketches of the Arab noblemen. Rather than take a table in the bar, we simply talked on the sofa where I had been waiting.

When I complimented his English, he said that he had lived in the United States from 1964 to 1972, first attending Xavier University in Ohio and later earning a doctorate in psychology from the University of California. After he returned to Jordan, he developed his practice. In 1984 he was elected to parliament, representing a district on the East Bank. Most of his constituents were Palestinian.

From what he said, it was clear that he admired much about the United States. Nonetheless, our conversation repeatedly came around to how Americans perceived Palestinians. It dismayed him that the only Palestinians Americans recognized were those who seized airplanes.

"Never are we portrayed as a people or a nation, but always as some outlaw gang," he said. "Just as it would be unfair to sum up Israel as a country that occasionally launched strafing missions against Palestinian camps, so too is it unfair only to equate Palestinians with acts of terror."

He feared the Israeli settlement of the West Bank marked a turning point for the Palestinians, and for the chances of peace in the region. There were now more than a hundred settlements and 60,000 "colonists," to use his description. He saw the 900,000 West Bank Arabs being squeezed into smaller quarters, as Israelis took more of the land. It was a re-run of what happened earlier in Palestine. That the United States had offered only token opposition, he said, implied approval of the venture.

"Just as Israel is an American dream, similar to those that pushed

West, settled the frontier, so, too, are the colonies," he said. Idealistically, he could see a negotiated peace over the West Bank, agreed to by Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians, in which control was returned to Jordan. But he could never imagine any of the settlers peacefully submitting to such a plan. Nor would the Israeli military ever mount a large-scale action against its own people.

"What then," he asked, "is the point of no return?"

The crossing from Amman to Jerusalem began at first light when a small bus, the kind rental car agencies use at airports, made the rounds of the hotels. On board was an assortment of

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Europeans, Asians, and Americans. To make this trip at all it was necessary to obtain a permit from the Ministry of Interior, which involved three days of dropping off and picking up my passport, standing in line at barred windows, and even buying a tax stamp from a robed clerk, whose office was a card table on the island of a busy intersection.

The guidebook described the crossing as "time-consuming and unpleasant" and went on at length about the Orwellian ritual necessary to go fifty miles between the ancient, sister cities: "The bridge closes at 1 p.m. daily and is completely closed on Saturdays, the Jewish sabbath. It's necessary to begin your journey early (via taxi) to reach the Jordanian security point, where you must board a bus, the only vehicle authorized to make the crossing. You cannot cross over in a taxi or your own car. The last bus leaves the security point (on both sides) at 11 a.m."

At sunrise, the bus descended one of the wadis, or dried river beds, that slope into the Jordan Valley. The road had none of the fortifications or tensions of, for example, the passage through the demilitarized zone at Panmunjom. The customs house, dedicated to King Hussein, was more a turnpike reststop than security checkpoint. Inside, seated behind a wooden desk, a Jordanian officer struggled to make sense of passports not written in languages he understood.

It took more than an hour to clear the Hussein barracks, but less than a minute to cross the Jordan at the Allenby Bridge. The river is no wider than a mountain stream, and the bridge, despite its aura, is a drab overpass of expressway proportions. Prior to the crossing an Israeli soldier boarded the

bus, drew the shades, and warned against picture taking, since, as it turned out, the far side was heavily fortified. Technically, because Israel only occupies Jordan's territory in the West Bank, the river isn't an international boundary. Nevertheless, geopolitics have invested it with the rituals of Berlin.

Another Israeli soldier met the bus at the modern immigration building. An Uzi machine gun hung casually from his shoulder. With a flick of his head, he ordered two Arabs, dressed in blue smocks, to unload the baggage. Across the parking lot an older bus, jammed with Palestinians, pulled up to a second frontier point. In this building—I was told repeatedly in Amman—Arabs were routinely asked, as part

of the inspections, to strip and pile their clothes in a basket.

From the checkpoint the road to Jerusalem raced across dry farmland north of the Dead Sea and, outside Jericho, passed a ghost village, which turned out to have been a refugee camp until 1967. Traffic slowed on the rocky foothills that lead into the city. Altogether from the Allenby Bridge it was an hour's drive—as it would be for tanks in an invasion.

Even though it is difficult to think of the Middle East as a tourist attraction, something called Diplomatic Services advertises "Israel Beyond Tourism" and operates briefing trips of the occupied territories. My group of ten included an Israeli family, an English couple, and an American scriptwriter from Hollywood who spent much of the day explaining to his various seatmates how soap operas are written.

The briefing before we left was an outline of local history. Israel refers to the two administrative districts of the West Bank by their biblical names, Judea and Samaria. On a map their borders—once the U.N. Green Line between Jordan and Israel—are a silhouette, perhaps that of Abraham Lincoln. To the north Samaria is the hair and face while Judea in the south takes the shape of the shoulders. Appropriately, at the throat or jugular vein is Jerusalem. From the northern border to the south is a day's drive along a tortuous two-lane road. East to west, however, is a matter of an hour or so. And at its widest point, the West Bank is nine miles from the Mediterranean Sea.

The story of the West Bank reads like that of Poland or Czechoslovakia, or any land which, because of its strategic placement, has as its history a chronicle of occupations. Turkish rule lasted until 1917 when General Allenby took Jerusalem. The British ruled Palestine, including the West Bank, until they departed following the Second World War. A 1947 U.N. Partition Plan designated the West Bank for a Palestinian state, but the Arabs rejected such a compromise. Jordan then annexed it in 1950 and remained in control until the 1967 war. Not until the mid-seventies did the Israeli government authorize settlements, and then only for defensive reasons. But the government of Menachem Begin pushed settlements to incorporate what it believed were Israel's historic lands.

Our first stop was a hilltop churchyard that overlooked the spires of the old city. The prophet Samuel was said to be buried here, although our interests were less biblical and more tactical. We reviewed the skyline as though sighting artillery. Until 1967, Jordanian troops were entrenched around three-quarters of the city in siege lines. In addition, Arab neighborhoods encircled those of Israelis, a position that continued even after the city was annexed. To redress this imbalance, the Israeli



government constructed a ring of settlements in the hills around Jerusalem. From the churchyard these houses resembled the condominiums that dot the Washington Beltway, although their placement re-enacted a crusader investment. The white prefabricated townhouses and their picket roofs glistened in the morning sun as the latest city wall. Someday, we were told, the West Bank might be returned to Jordan, but never again would Jerusalem be an Arab city.

The occupation of Judea and Samaria presented Israel with a colonial mission: that of governing 900,000 Palestinians. At the office of civil administration in the West Bank—in appearance, a military base—we heard from an American-born Israeli officer how local government operates. The civil service comprises 300 Israelis and 1200 Arabs, who enforce a hodgepodge of Jordanian, international, and military law. In rare cases the Israelis prosecute Arabs under the same hated statutes that the British used against Jews under the Mandate.

The briefing compared the Israeli colonial record with that of Jordan's. By any measure—except perhaps that of hearts and minds—conditions have improved on the West Bank since 1967: fifty percent of the villages now have running water, as opposed to twenty percent; infant mortality is down; 10,000 students attend five universities which have been founded under the Israeli occupation; more than 7,000 families have moved from refugee camps into new public housing; and the local administration has introduced a number of social services, including day care, job training, and programs for the elderly and sick.

Nevertheless, the West Bank remains the tar-baby of Israeli politics. Were it established as a Palestinian state, either independently or in federation with Jordan, questions about security might topple any Israeli government, even if the territory were demilitarized and Israel were to establish a defense around all boundaries. Only a handful of Israelis would solve the problem by expelling the Palestinians from the occupied territories. Judea and Samaria could be annexed, as with Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, but that might raise the prospect that one day the majority of Israelis would be Arab. Nor has it been easy to deal with Jordan on the question. King Hussein, a Bedouin, rules a country with a Palestinian majority, which could use a state or federation on the West Bank to overthrow the Hashemite Kingdom. Finally, Israel must contend with the settlers, who while small in number have a powerful hold on the electorate. None are eager to live under Arab sovereignty. As a consequence, the stalemate on the

West Bank is now in its twenty-first year.

The typical settlement is a condominium in the hills, fenced by barbed wire—a lonely outpost in enemy lands. Images of Vietnam's strategic hamlets come to mind, only these are equipped with air conditioning and two-car garages. Some are religious communities where members participate in all aspects of village life, as if at a kibbutz.

The first settlements in the Jordan Valley formed a tripwire to signal a Jordanian attack. They provided the Israeli government with reservists at the

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frontier. Later came the religious settlers, for whom the West Bank represented a return to biblical lands. But the larger design of the settlements was to create a demographic club sandwich that would intersperse Jewish communities between those of Arabs. On a map, simply by connecting the dots of the settlements, it is easy to see the entrenchment lines that run north-south through the West Bank. Maginot had only one line in France—here Israel has three or four.

Ariel, where we stopped for lunch, is a linchpin in this defense. Twenty-one miles from both the Jordan River and Mediterranean Sea, it sits abreast the Patriarch's Road, a major thoroughfare. Several years ago it was another windswept barren hillside with more rocks than trees at the top. Today the population is 2,000, which is planned to increase to 160,000 in the next century. Those who don't find work in one of the local factories or in an adjacent industrial park will commute to Tel Aviv. In the grand design the settlers will become suburbanites.

Leaving Ariel to the northwest, we drove to the point where from the hills of the West Bank it is possible to look across the entire width of Israel to the sea. During the 1967 war Israeli fighter pilots nicknamed this spot “Mickey Mouse,” because of two ear-shaped towers that protruded from the landscape. Even in hazy sunshine the high-rise apartments in Tel Aviv were clearly visible, as were cooling towers from a nuclear power station and Boeing 747 jets making lazy turns on their final approach to Ben Gurion airport. Whoever controls the West Bank controls this high ground, with its natural defenses as stubborn as those at Gallipoli.

Near the Allon Road east of Nablus is an early settlement, Ofra, which in the 1970s was established on the grounds of an abandoned army camp. Ending the day here, we came to listen to Shifra Blass, a spokeswoman for the Council of Jewish Settlement in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.

When the first families arrived, Ofra was a tent camp. To hear a description today, it was the Middle East equivalent of Injun country—with Arabs serving the role of Indians. Each night settlers huddled together behind the wire. The men carried guns. The only jobs were in clearing the land.

Eventually the crops took hold in the rocky soil, and the tents were replaced with row houses, which could have been ordered from the Levittown catalogue. A hundred families with 350 children moved in, and in addition to a metal factory the settlement put up a silk-screening plant and various craft shops.

As though on a sales tour, we saw Ofra by bus. Shifra Blass acted as guide, and her descriptions of the settlement made it sound like one of the utopian communities in nineteenth-century America, perhaps Putney or Oneida. Residents were carefully screened. Anyone wishing to live at Ofra had to pass a trial year and then receive community approval. Only Orthodox Jews were admitted, and everyone shared in the chores, be they farming or child care. All agreed that Israel had a biblical, moral, and political right to settle the West Bank.

Mrs. Blass exuded an air of manifest destiny. Her plain, rough-cotton dress and fortitude, despite the latter stages of pregnancy, were consistent with Ofra's prairie setting. In an earlier time she might have been found leading wagons through the Cumberland Gap. In fact, when she spoke later in the community center, she said she had grown up in Philadelphia and emigrated in the early 1970s.

The Israel that she found along the Mediterranean coast, however, did not mesh with her Zionist ideals.

“Tel Aviv wasn't mentioned in my Bible,” she said, adding that to her Israel was the biblical towns of Hebron or Nablus or Jericho. “What does Zionism have to do with living in a high-rise overlooking the water?” she asked. It further offended her, when

she lived in Tel Aviv, that these biblical lands were off-limits to Israelis. Of this policy she said: “What hypocrisy to speak of Israel, of Zionism, of a return to the lands of the Bible and then not to let people settle in the holiest towns.”

Having won the right to live in the West Bank, the settlers were working to purchase as much of the land as was for sale and to defeat any peace initiative that would put them under Arab rule. Mrs. Blass said that land was being purchased fairly, despite the Palestinian claim that the Israelis were pressuring Arabs to sell. As for living under Palestinian or Jordanian rule, she could not imagine it. It brought to her mind Jerusalem under the Jordanians. They had let the city, especially the Jewish quarter, deteriorate. She said it had been “an ugly city, dirty.” Israelis had been forbidden to enter their holiest shrines, which were allowed to fall into disrepair. What comfort did that offer for a future under the Jordanians?

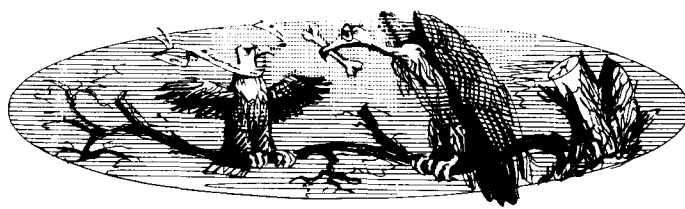
Nor could she imagine any Israeli government forcibly removing the settlers as part of any peace plan. When Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt after Camp David, the military needed weapons to remove some of the settlers there. But it was an ugly scene, not to be repeated, especially on the scale of the settlements of the West Bank.

As she concluded: “What the settlers are doing today is no different from what the first Zionists did when they reached Palestine.”

We rode home through Ramallah, an Arab town fifteen miles north of Jerusalem. It was almost dark when, on the edge of the town, an Israeli officer stopped the bus. Up ahead, he explained, rocks were being thrown at cars. It was up to us whether or not to proceed. After deliberations with the tour guide, the driver went ahead, grinding his way through the low gears until the van settled into overdrive.

When we reached the town center, Ramallah had the eerie look of Northern Ireland or Soweto. Troops in full battle gear lined both sides of the main street. Machine guns were drawn. Lurching side to side from the speed, the van followed several trucks past this formation. No rocks were felt against the windshield, however. In fact, few Arabs could be seen on the street. Outside Ramallah, we blended into the rush hour traffic and arrived safely in Jerusalem, although I couldn't help wondering whether someday a rock thrown in anger would become, yet again, a shot heard 'round the world. □

THE NATION'S PULSE



PLAGUES AND THE COMMON LIFE

by Dave Shiflett

"Great gallopin' trouser snakes, look at them gals!" Those were the days, sitting in the park while your sexual opposites (or otherwise, if you were depraved) filled your heart with fire. A wink here, a reciprocal glance there, and the lamest ego stood up and sprinted.

And what a laugh it was hearing a toothless man with a face rash fantasize about the current Cosmo Girl. Or a Bowery bum imagining trysts with Princess Di. These were supreme illustrations of the human spirit: hope even in the face of very slim odds.

A useful arrangement—while it lasted.

With AIDS, lust bares its teeth. The message: retreat, or die. The old world shatters. A very strange one takes its place.

In the AIDS world, fantasies become death wishes, a wolf whistle the first movement of a dirge. Blond bombshells become biological warheads. Bikinis, which have brought more men to water than thirst, drape not the rose, but the venus flytrap. Whither Fort Lauderdale?

An extreme view? Maybe so. But the more you think about the effect AIDS could have, the more you shudder. It's like thinking about nuclear war, except for one vital difference: AIDS is here. A microscopic virus, allied with the strongest of urges, may sire the largest graveyard in the history of disease—even war. Its effect on the human psyche could rival that of the Black Death and the cycle of plagues that followed. It could remake man.

The Black Death itself lasted from 1347 to 1351, and when it was over, the Catholic Church estimated that 23,840,000 people died in Christian Europe alone. Some estimates go as high as 50 million dead overall. "A third of the world died," said Jean Foissart, as was the case in Paris, whose population was between 80,000 and

200,000 when the plague struck in the spring of 1348. "During the peak months of November and December," writes historian Robert Gottfried, "it was reported that 800 people died each day."

The survivors were devastated, their institutions shaken. The Christian church took a direct hit, with some historians citing the plague (along with the selling of all 10,000 of St. Paul's index fingers and other indulgences) as a primary cause of the Protestant Reformation. The gates of Hell will not prevail against the Church, Christ promised, but a mob of flea-carrying rats was quite capable of diversifying it.

The clergy did its part to shake the faith, having asserted itself as the way to salvation, then bolting in the hour of need. Writes Gottfried: "... many parish priests fled, leaving no one to offer services, deliver last rites and comfort the sick." The monks of Auwa packed up and beat it over to Olm, where, according to author Philip Ziegler, "they dissipated the monastery's treasure in riotous living." Things were in such disarray that, in January 1349, the bishop of Bath and

Wells wrote a letter to parish priests ordering them to "... persuade all men, in particular those who are now sick or should feel sick in the future, that, if they are on the point of death and cannot secure the services of a priest, then they should make confession to each other ... or if no man is present, then even to a woman."

Sensing a flush life—three squares, a bunk, a crack at the offering plate—shysters moved in as the clergy thinned out. "Quantity was preferred to quality," according to the late Yves Renouard. "A run to the monasteries began; the practice of offering ten- to fourteen-year-old children to the Friars Preachers as oblates became general."

Taking all this in, many of the faithful decided to navigate their own celestial course. The mother of invention would produce a great and wondrous brood: Jim and Tammy, Oral Roberts, Reverend Ike. Six hundred years later, the plague continues to deliver its punchlines.

Religion wasn't the only thing that changed. Art and music became obsessed with death. Even calendar pictures got gloomy, with pre-plague

spring and summer scenes giving way to studies of winter and fall. Secularism crept into other art forms: Chaucer and Boccaccio, the era's most famous writers, stepped from the straight and narrow to celebrate the sensual life, going so far as to celebrate the spiritual benefits of breaking wind. Mel Brooks owes his own debt to the rats.

So did the Pied Piper of Hamelin, an operator of the first order.

"What probably happened at Hamelin," explains the late and gifted James Westfall Thompson, "was this: the town was infested with rats; the Pied Piper made his appearance (whether a charlatan or lunatic cannot be said) and offered to charm the rats away. The rats probably stayed, but the Piper's strange costume and stranger power which he declared that he possessed, united with intense, even hysterical emotionalism of the people, working upon the natural curiosity of children at the sight of such a wondrous spectacle as the Piper in their streets, lured the children after him and they were scattered, never to return. The poor children ... suffered from the fate of those who went on the Children's Crusade, many of whom we know fell into the hands of professional kidnapers and slavers."

It's easy, of course, to kick a plague around, but some good did come of it. While the Piper pocketed his loot, other economic transformations were afoot to help usher in the modern age. Ragged tenants, looking in on the master and his missus, found a houseful of corpses. Two responses followed. "Poor things," and "We're Rich!" Wages shot up, as workers were scarce. The yeoman, too, is a child of the rat. The subsistence crisis that had plagued Europe disappeared.

The new economic order distressed the nobility and clergy, who fought back with legislation like France's 1349 Statute of Labor, which attempted (without success) to limit wages to pre-1348 levels. In England, the King's Council froze wages and levied taxes,



Dave Shiflett is a writer living in Virginia.

leading to rebellions like the English Peasant's Revolt of 1381, during which organizer Wat Tyler urged his mates to "kill all lawyers and servants of the king." He was hanged for his trouble, but his philosophical descendents rule huge sections of the Earth.

Probably the most creative entrepreneur of the age was Janiheg, the Mongol khan of the Kigchaks, who was besieging the port of Kaffa when plague broke out among his troops. Sensing an opportunity, he had the dead catapulted into the heart of the city, ridding himself of the corpses and dispiriting his foes. Warrior/scholars hail Janiheg as the father of biological warfare.

Positive contributions aside, however, the plague earned its reputation as a world-shaking event. So will it be with AIDS. If 100 million people have the virus by the turn of the century, as the U.S. surgeon general has predicted, and 40 percent develop the disease and die, that's 40 million dead. The World Health Organization says 100 million people could be infected within five years.

Even if these figures are high, one thing's for sure: The disease will stuff the ground with bones, and minds with mortal terror. Homosexuals will not quake alone. More than enough heterosexuals are going to die from AIDS to rattle the survivors. The question becomes: Is a roll in the hay worth dying for?

The bodies, however, are not the heart of the problem. All of us, after all, are going to die. The most unsettling thing about AIDS is that it is, basically, anti-progressive. Just as Ronald Reagan came along to roll back Communism, AIDS seems designed to roll back the modern age. No wonder the Kremlin thinks the disease was hatched in a CIA lab.

Consider what AIDS could do to man's self-image. Nature herself is seen as a subdued force, even when it

comes to performing the death function. She might pick us off one by one, and every once in a while throw a volcano or tidal wave our way. But basically she gnaws at us; her steady death knell is background music. Any mass killing is handled by man himself. Professor R. J. Rummel added it up last year and found that war has killed 35.7 million people this century, and the total number of people killed by their own governments, by the conservative estimate, was 119.4 million.

Mass murder established man as the master of his fate in a way nothing else could. Mao and Stalin outkilled smallpox, and Hitler surely killed more people than God's Great Flood. Heady stuff, in its own, perverse way.

With AIDS, nature returns with a vengeance. Man may have learned to split atoms, reverse rivers, and fly to the moon, but as far as fighting AIDS is concerned, he might as well be living in the stone age. Impotence is tough to accept.

AIDS will do more than reduce confidence in human institutions. It will shake many people to their very souls. As sex and death become linked—as is inevitable—that which attracts will also repulse. With these opposites simultaneously ricocheting through the skull, peace of mind will be hard to come by.

Some will suffer more than others. The sexual revolution encouraged fantasizing, and it's likely that the skill is at its highest historical level of development. This may come to be seen as an unwanted talent. Experts may even start to envy the folks who tried to keep the lust to a minimum, just like it says in the Good Book.

Indeed, the people most likely to pass mentally intact into the post-AIDS world are religious fundamentalists, currently the second-class citizens of the intellectual world. The scourge fits neatly into that view of things, with AIDS representing God's judgment on illicit sex. It would be wrong, from the fundamentalist position, to get upset

about God's will. Instead, it is a thing to be celebrated.

Meanwhile, those whose understanding of the universe is based on Darwinism—i.e., the people who run the developed world—will have to watch the folks who disdain natural selection (one way of looking at plagues) actually drawing strength from its machinations. The scientific conclusion: Those who deny reality will be best suited to deal with it.

How will Dr. Ruth cope? In all likelihood, most people tune in to see reports from the frontiers of sexuality, and make a real point of watching during watermelon season. Surely, AIDS is going to force a slowdown among the exotic adventurers. Her telephone may end up in the Smithsonian.

Many television shows, especially the jiggers, could also lose their appeal. The star may have a great physique, but maybe she also has the bug. AIDS could spay an entire generation of vixens. The same with rock 'n' roll, which, without sex, is like beer without alcohol. What's the point?

Mainline religion could take another hit. The *National Catholic Reporter*, which has no official ties to the Catholic Church, reported that 50 percent of the nation's 57,000 priests may be homosexual. Church officials dispute this number—and surely it's inflated—but no one knows what the true figure is, as is the case with other denominations. No matter the number, a priest or minister dying from AIDS is a faith-shaking event. Philandering preachers have always produced skeptics, and they have generally been caught messing around with women.

Believers will also have to tussle with Christ's commandment to care for the sick. Non-compliance, it is written, is to be rewarded with an eternal berth in the hot place, but despite this incentive, AIDS will probably claim more victims than will be reflected in the body count.

For sure, plagues haven't brought out the best in the Christian community, as we witnessed in the treatment of European Jews during the Black Death. Pogroms are less likely this time around, but everyone should be prepared to experience other forms of non-progressive behavior. Chastity for instance. Even Erica Jong is talking about it. That means thinner pickings at the meat market, and more weddings graced by a virgin at the altar—maybe even two. Role models may include June Cleaver (the Beave's mom) and Art Linkletter.

It could get stranger than that. Imagine a group with current attitudes being transported to the year 2000, when the disease will have had time to alter

the landscape. By then, New York might have a great deal in common with modern-day Tehran. Provocative styles are long gone, and women no longer worry about "street harassment"—not even from construction workers. Prostitutes will have moved from the streets to the wax museums. As you walk along 42nd Street, you might overhear a kid asking his mother "Who was Frederick of Hollywood?" Nine of ten of the chadora-clad gals won't have a clue.

The Village, hard hit by the scourge, will be undergoing gentrification—by Baptists, Pentecostals, and Mormons. Occasionally, during the process of stripping down an apartment, a homesteader will come across a bullwhip or some other artifact. "Anita!" he will call out to his wife (she having been named after Ms. Bryant), "I found a relic." Someday it could be valuable, along with those Bette Midler albums and the copy of *Blueboy* he found under the stairs.

Taken all together, the AIDS world will look pretty grim. Caution in sexual matters will probably reduce the number of welfare dependents, abortion providers, and divorce lawyers. The *Village Voice* classifieds will be about as thick as its current religion section. The visiting progressive observes all this, smacks his head, and screams, "There goes the business!"

Reaction, in short, will reign. William Jennings Bryan will be in, Clarence Darrow out. Mobs will pull down all statues of Mick Jagger, replacing them with monuments to Pat Boone. Because a flat stomach or flexing thigh could trigger an anxiety attack in a potential mate, bodies will return to flab. Liberation-types will burn their running shoes, and you won't be able to find a wheat germ with an electron microscope. Spas will promise to give you a body just like Grover Cleveland's.

What on Earth will people do with themselves?

Reading could pick up, and so literary conversations may become commonplace, ranging from critiques of Homer down at the bowling alley to remembrances of the good old days in the ladies locker room.

"You remember Sidney Sheldon, Alexis?"

"Oh yes. He was so very influential. I understand his work helped take out half of Southern California."

Imagine it: When the final tale is told in the battle against AIDS, Xaviera Hollander—a.k.a. The Happy Hooker—may go down as a war criminal. Dr. Ruth? She may end her years hiding out in Paraguay. □



THE PUBLIC POLICY



CLINIC WARS

by Donna Steichen

Minneapolis

The current hysteria about “children having children” is a dog and pony show: public relations razzle-dazzle concealing a private agenda. In an all-out offensive against childbearing among the lower classes, the nation’s birth control lobby aims to persuade the public that sexual abstinence among teenagers is as obsolete as the quilting bee. Given the new sexual norm, spokesmen argue, realistic social policies to protect the young, and to cut welfare costs, must include supervising school children in “diligent contraceptive use”—at school—while keeping abortion available as a backup, whether or not parents approve of either measure.

Critics call the campaign a socially elitist, inherently racist scam designed to serve the marketing interests of fertility-control professionals, for there is, in fact, no epidemic of teen-age childbearing. In the United States, that phenomenon peaked in 1957, at 96 births per 1000 (when 85 percent of the mothers were married). By 1984, the rate was down more than 50 percent, to 46.7 per 1000. Almost two-thirds of today’s teen mothers are legally adult; births to girls of high school age in 1984 were not “more than one million,” as frequently claimed, but 166,744, and the decline continues. Among girls under 15, the birth rate is about one in 1000, lower than it was in 1970. Even the percentage of girls who admit to being “sexually active” has declined modestly in the past couple of years.

Teen pregnancy, on the other hand, is a graver problem than it was in the fertile 1950s. The decline in adolescent fertility has, since the early 1970s, been achieved almost entirely by abortion: among pregnant girls under 15, abortions outnumber births, and some 40 percent of all teen pregnancies end in abortion. People who oppose abortion

see the situation as a problem of intolerable dimensions, but they deny that it will be solved by birth control entrepreneurs who defend “confidential” abortion as an essential and acceptable component of “family planning” programs for children. If abortion is the right solution, they observe, the teen pregnancy problem is already solved.

Nevertheless, a coalition of interested parties—population control philanthropists like the Ford, Mott, Rockefeller, and Hewlett Foundations, contraceptive manufacturer Johnson and Johnson (through its Robert Wood Johnson Foundation), public relations operatives of the family planning establishment, assorted true believers, and collaborators in the press—have turned several dubious pieces of research into a propaganda parade. And here in Minnesota, where the teen birth rate is the nation’s second lowest, Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser is leading the procession.

In public manner a modest, soft-spoken, Pat Paulsen of a politician, Fraser, a former congressman, has usually exerted his influence behind the scenes, but zeal has lately pushed him out of character. If the mayor wanted to avert out-of-wedlock pregnancies by chaperoning young people or by persuading them to embrace continence, most citizens would applaud. But what he wants is birth control for junior and senior high students, sponsored by government, and concealed from parents. And he wants it especially for the dark-skinned and the poor. Only his previous liberal credentials have so far shielded him from charges of elitism and racism, and that shield is beginning to drop.

In February 1984, Mayor Fraser appointed a “Coordinating Council for Youth,” to advise him on the gravest concerns of young people. On cue, members said they worried most about teen pregnancy. Working out of the Mayor’s office, they organized a four-session “Colloquium on Adolescent

Pregnancy and Parenting,” held early in 1985. Speakers from the national birth control establishment were invited to stir enthusiasm and offer advice. The Boards of Education and Health, the public library, United Way, the League of Women Voters, the Minnesota Council of Churches, academicians, business leaders, and the media all pledged cooperation. Unanimously, participants identified race and poverty as sources of The Problem, which, several said, even extended to

married adult members of ethnic subcultures whose attitudes toward sex and childbearing are insufficiently progressive.

Families could meet most infants’ needs in the past, said Dr. Geraldine Carter, director of the Survival Skills Institute, but today the therapeutic state must take over much of the burden of raising children. Some families, she complained, stubbornly reject that solution.

“Parental resistance to non-family



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teaching of social values," is part of the problem, Carter said. "No matter how good a job the schools and social service agencies do, little progress in preventing teen pregnancy will occur" unless parents can be enlightened about "the ways their children learn sex roles."

As an example of how dangerous sex roles are formed, she cited "the strong emphasis placed in the black commu-

nity on a young girl's ability to mother. Reinforcement of this value begins at a very early age, 6 and 7, as the girl receives praise and strokes for the way she parents [sic] her brothers and sisters." Carter called the practice "culturally specific behavior that contributes to early pregnancies."

Family-centered subcultures are afflicted by an unrecognized need for contraception, other speakers indicat-

ed. "Birth control information is badly needed" among Hmong immigrants' "traditionally male-dominated families," said Phoue Thao of the Minneapolis Health Department. "If a teenager becomes pregnant, she and the male are expected to marry. . . . Sex in that culture is very private and not openly discussed."

Endalia Reyes Smith, assistant director of Centro Cultural Chicano, spoke

of "the need for better information regarding teen parenthood" among Chicanos, where "adolescent pregnancy is considered shameful, and the pressure upon the young couple to marry is very strong."

The local newspapers have been especially accommodating to the mayor's cause: last year, when State Senator Linda Berglin's bill to permit birth control clinics in all state schools was debated, amended to prohibit abortion, and then withdrawn by the disappointed author, no word of it appeared in the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch*, or the *University of Minnesota Daily*. Instead, readers waded through a flood of news reports about epidemic teen pregnancy, feature stories about the splendid work of school birth control clinics, and editorial comment reproaching Pope John Paul II and any other laggards unpersuaded of the wisdom of such measures.

During the unreported legislative hearings on Senator Berglin's bill, one issue of the *Tribune* carried two stories about Fraser's project. The first, headlined, "Campaign will cry out concern for pregnant teen-agers," featured a seventeen-year-old black mother from North High, one of three city schools already equipped with birth control clinics. She had made a mistake, she admitted, when she "had sex *without using birth control*" (emphasis added), and she urged other school girls to take advantage of clinic services. In case any reader had missed the message, her photograph, with another young black mother, illustrated the second story: "High school mothers ignored birth control."

Across the Mississippi in St. Paul, the *Pioneer Press and Dispatch* ran a multi-part series on "Children Having Children," in June 1986. At the University of Minnesota, interviews with Michael Resnick, a "medical sociologist," provided copy for the *Daily*. Under the headline, "Most unwed mothers Indian or black," a half-page article in May 1986 focused on Sara, seventeen and black, who considers abortion murder and plans to live on welfare after her baby is born, and Suzanne, sixteen and Indian, who plans to move in "with friends" after the birth of her baby, because her parents are "really strict" and she wants "more freedom." On the other half-page, a story quoted the Center for Population Options on the high cost of supporting single mothers on welfare. The CPO, a tax-exempt Washington, D.C. organization, is the national center for the movement to put birth control clinics in public schools.

The clinics, understandably, appeal

LibertyPress

ORIGINS OF THE COMMON LAW

By Arthur R. Hogue

First published in 1966 by Indiana University Press, Arthur R. Hogue's *Origins of the Common Law* looks at the deep medieval roots of our legal system during the early formative period of the common law. Between 1154 and 1307, from the reign of Henry II to that of Edward I, common law experienced a spectacular growth as a legal system enforced in the English Royal Courts. Paraphrasing Professor Hogue: in the form of writs, judicial decisions, treatises, royal ordinances, and parliamentary statutes, the common law, in large part the definition of established customs, emerged into explicit written form and formal procedure to order better such ordinary relationships among Englishmen as those between landlord and tenant, merchant and money lender, and buyer and seller.

In his final chapter, "From Medieval Law to Modern Law," Hogue concludes, "The rule of law, the development of law by means of judicial precedents, the use of the jury to determine the material facts of a case, and the definition of numerous causes of action—these form the principal and valuable legacy of the medieval law to the modern law." And one might add, to the growth of the concept of liberty as well.

This thoughtful, lucid account is a work of history, not a technical legal treatise, and should be of interest to the general reader and the specialist alike.

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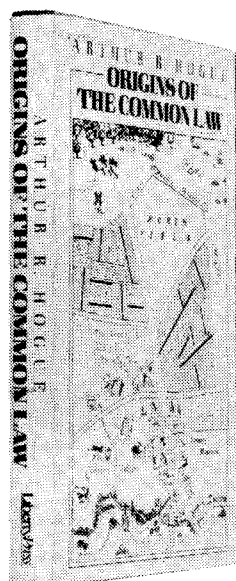
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to "family planning professionals" as places where they can provide school-wide sex education, free physicals and immunizations, and—because, technically, they are not school agencies, inhibited by standard laws regarding school services—prescribe free contraceptives and make abortion referrals without the parents' knowledge or permission.

A recent survey, circulated jointly by CPO and the abortion lobby Catholics for a Free Choice, warned that support for abortion is dwindling among high school students. School clinics offer a way to reclaim that endangered consumer market, and even expand it where it has been weak: among the unsuitably fertile minorities. More than seventy school clinic programs were operating in the United States during the 1986-87 school year; the number could double next year. Typically, they are established in inner-city neighborhoods with large low-income black and Hispanic populations.

Some prominent blacks see racial contempt in the drive by clinic proponents to institutionalize non-reproductive recreational sex among those "high risk" groups. Syndicated columnist William Raspberry compared school-based clinics to "student seminars in how-not-to-get-caught-shoplifting." "The primary targets of sex clinic operators are black schools," economist Walter Williams observed. "Blacks and poor people are frequently used as stalking horses . . . People wishing to lace public schools with sex have discovered a new use for blacks."

Such clinics are not new to Minnesota. The pioneer program universally cited as a model was established in St. Paul in 1973. Minneapolis followed with the North High clinic in 1978. Earlier ventures, however, strove for a low public profile. "We don't broadcast," one clinic official said in 1980. "No publicity, no problems." Mayor Fraser by contrast has flamboyantly sought publicity, apparently convinced that the general public shares his goals.

He may be mistaken. Minnesota's politically powerful pro-life movement has entered the field as evidence accumulates that school-based clinics reduce births rather than pregnancies. Studies by independent researchers Stan Weed and Joseph Olsen, reported in the *Wall Street Journal* last October, showed that federally funded teen birth control programs have, since 1971, very slightly reduced birth rates among their clients while their pregnancy rates rose as much as 120 per 1000. It is not contraception but abortion—about 400,000 a year—that has brought the teen birthrate down. Clinic advocates

hide that failure behind inadequate record keeping. The acclaimed St. Paul clinic program, for example, records neither pregnancies nor abortions, only live births.

School busing for racial balance has recently brought Hmong and black inner-city students to Minneapolis's upper-middle class South West High School. In their wake has come the first effort to put a school birth control clinic into an affluent neighborhood. A new parent constituency, less susceptible to bureaucratic intimidation, has entered the debate, and the resulting confrontation may threaten the mayor's program.

Recently incorporated as the "Minnesota Coalition for Adolescent Health," they are putting together a formidable network. At one recent meeting, representatives from the Colonial Church of upper-class Edina, from the black northside Hospitality House, from evangelical social service organizations, Lutheran congregations and the Catholic Archdiocese mingled with doctors, lawyers, housewives, and country-clubbers. The arrogance of clinic proponents keeps everybody's adrenalin level high. President Katherine Hubbell fumes that clinic planners applied for a grant, arranged for clinic affiliation with Minneapolis's Children's Medical Center, selected and measured space for the projected school clinic, yet parents were never formally notified that it was under consideration.

"Apparently, a so-called 'Adolescent Health Advisory Committee' made up of four students, two parents and some school staff members have made all the decisions in this matter," she said. "When school staff was asked when there would be a meeting for parent input, the reply was that such a meeting would be 'inappropriate' until the funds were assured!" Start-up funding, reportedly \$600,000, is expected from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Once that sum was spent, taxpayers would be responsible for the bills.

Member David Pence, M.D., a long-time civil rights advocate and an outspoken critic of lax public health measures against AIDS, sees the anti-clinic coalition as a glorious opportunity to "take back our city" from sex-program ideologues, radical feminists, and homosexual rights advocates. Pence, who served his internship at the Minneapolis Indian Health Board, thinks the high pressure birth control campaign will die of racism and sexually transmitted disease—and he views the two as viciously related. Indian mothers, according to Pence, see that clinicians who give their fourteen-year-old daughters the Pill are "just

pimping for them." The damage will be permanent, Pence says, because "a lot of them will get PID—pelvic inflammatory disease—and a lot of them are going to be sterile. That will really cut down the minority population." AIDS, too, will soon spread among young Indians and blacks, he predicts. "I think this is going to be part of a renewed civil rights battle."

It may be the specter of pandemic AIDS that finally puts an end to permissive adolescent sex programs. Mayor Don Fraser and his fellow troupers are on a collision course with reality. Unfortunately, they probably will not bear the full weight of their mistakes themselves. It will fall, instead, on the young, the poor, and the non-white. □

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PRESSWATCH



TOP SECRETS

by Michael Ledeen

Some years ago, I knew a person who had spent his professional lifetime on Capitol Hill, mostly as a senior staff member of committees investigating hostile foreign intelligence operations in the United States. Toward the end of his career—we are talking about the late seventies—he decided to investigate something on his own, and filed a Freedom of Information Act request for documents concerning the foreign travel of leaders of the anti-Vietnam war movement over the course of the previous decade. I don't know what he expected to find, but he was astonished at the enormous volume of reports that he received; thousands of pages documenting hundreds of trips to such places as Havana, Prague, Sofia, and Moscow. This impressed him, and so he called a press conference to share his discoveries with the protectors of "the public's right to know." A handful of journalists showed up, listened for a while, and left. Not a single story appeared. Being a reflective person, he pondered the significance of his experiences, and issued a new definition of "Top Secret": something the press will not report.

On this basis, there was a fascinating Top Secret two-page advertisement in the *Washington Times* on May 22, written by one of Washington's better-known personalities: Anthony R. (Tony) Dolan, Ronald Reagan's top speechwriter. Tony Dolan bought the space because the *Times* was unwilling to give him so much space on the op-ed page, and the advertisement was entitled "What the *Washington Post* doesn't tell its readers." The subject was the coverage the *Post* had given to the death of Tony's brother Terry, who had been the chairman of the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC).

Terry had of course been a major political actor, since NCPAC had been one of the primary sources of funding

for Reagan's presidential campaigns, and for those of dozens of conservative candidates for lesser offices. He had died of AIDS, and nearly six months after his death (on May 11), the *Post* ran a long article in its "Style" section: "The Cautious Closet of the Gay Conservative." The basic theme of the article was that Terry Dolan had been a homosexual to the day he died, and the tone of the article was one of sympathy for homosexuals afflicted with the fatal disease. There was no direct comment in the article from other members of the Dolan family; indeed the *Post* article stated that the family did not wish to comment on the matter. Finally, a good deal of the story rested on the word of a Catholic priest, who, according to the *Post*, had been Terry's confessor and spiritual adviser through the final months of his life. Tony Dolan's article pointed to a variety of factual errors, some of which, in Dolan's strongly worded opinion, indicated grievous faults in the *Post*'s handling of the story. The priest in question was not Terry Dolan's spiritual adviser; indeed Terry, having undergone a religious conversion that led him to aban-

don and denounce homosexuality, asked for a different priest. Thus the *Post*'s prime source turns out to be questionable. Furthermore, Terry's rejection of homosexuality—not reported by the *Post*—undermines the basic theme of the story. Finally, not only did the Dolan family wish to comment on the matter, but no less than three senior editors of the *Post*, including Ben Bradlee himself, had promised Tony Dolan that the story would not be published without their comments. The three promises turned out to be worthless.

This would be bad enough, but Tony Dolan's indictment of the *Post* goes even further. As he points out, the *Post* has decided that the sexuality of public figures is legitimate fodder for the reading public, and homosexuality in particular seems to have stirred the interest of several *Post* journalists. According to Dolan, Ben Bradlee believes that "there might be a sizable number of gays in his newsroom and held out the possibility they might have had something to do

with this story." Dolan continues:

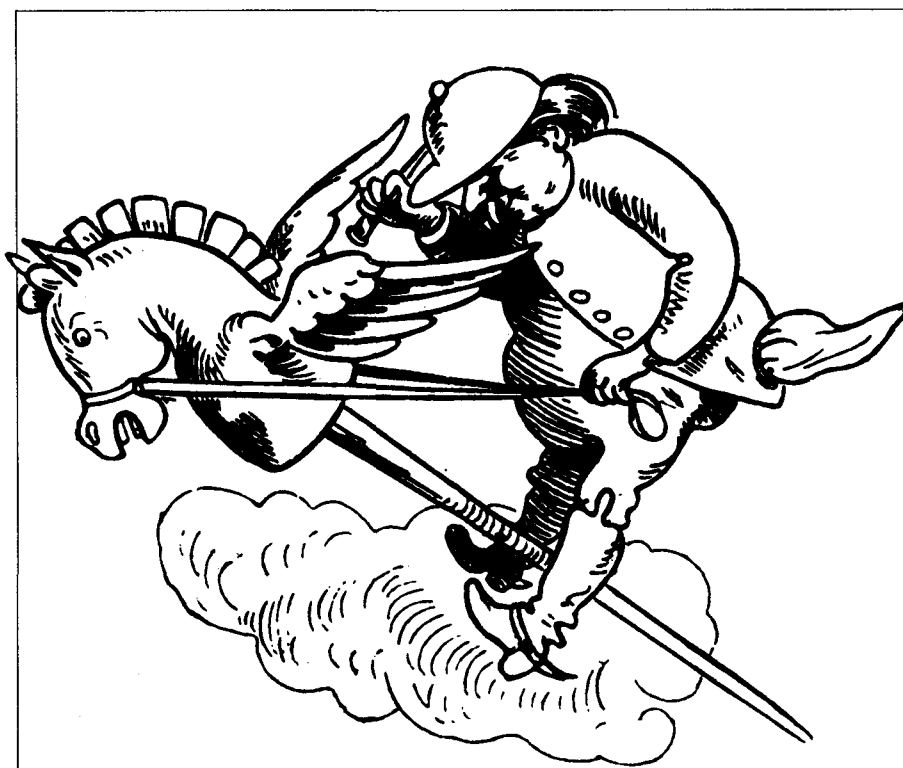
The question is, what are the problems with letting homosexual partisans or ideologues, who have a deep commitment to their way of life, work on stories about these issues, especially stories accusing others of being part of the gay community.

It is indeed a real problem, for readers are entitled to know if reporters have strong biases about the stories they are covering. This general problem is not a new one for Ben Bradlee or the journalists of the *Washington Post*. Sidney Blumenthal, chief assassin on the anti-conservative hit squad, used to write about Gary Hart for the *New Republic* while he was working on Hart's speeches, and he wrote a long, loving essay on the ultra-left Institute for Policy Studies for the *Post* without informing readers that he used to work for one of the institute's publications. Not only were *Post* readers never informed of these activities (and hence the likelihood of bias in Blumenthal's stories), but when a book appeared that reported Blumenthal's activities on the Hart campaign, the *Post* never mentioned that, either.

Given the *Post*'s decision to write a long piece on Terry Dolan, one marvels at its decision to "spike" a story on Gary Hart's sexuality. In case you've forgotten it, shortly after the *Miami Herald's* stakeout of the Hart residence in Washington produced the Donna Rice story, the *Post* informed Hart, and the world, that *Post* journalists had known for months that Hart was having yet another affair, in Washington, with the wife of a senator. This allegedly catalyzed Hart's decision to withdraw from the presidential campaign. Why was the story not run? Tony Dolan writes that

the story it ran about [Terry Dolan] and the *Post*'s refusal to hear out the facts that refuted it, proved the *Post* values its role as an ideological and political power-center with a pro-gay, anti-conservative agenda more than it does its responsibilities as a newspaper.

Does the same perhaps apply to the



Michael Ledeen is senior fellow in international affairs at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

mysterious spiking of the Gary Hart story? Or did the *Post* intend to sit on its story until such a time that it would have the maximum impact on the political campaign?

As interesting as the story itself is the story of its treatment by the major media: silence. An AP story went out on the wire, and was carried here and there in local papers. One might have thought that the *Post* would have replied in some form to Tony Dolan's indictment of its practices, but nothing of the sort took place. Just as the unethical behavior of Sidney Blumenthal was never reported, so Tony Dolan's charges went unmentioned and unchallenged by Washington's leading newspaper. This is perhaps not surprising. But it is surprising, and grounds for grave concern, that not one other major newspaper in America took a hard look at the matter, or otherwise called the *Post* to account. This is a forgotten story, wrapped in the most effective form of secrecy: silence from the press.

The Philosophy of the New York Times

The editorialists of the *New York Times* are enraged about the Reagan Administration again, and so be it. They say (June 14), quoting Congressman Lee Hamilton (chairman of the House Select Committee on the Iran/contraband investigation), that the American government "cannot function cloaked in secrecy . . . cannot function unless officials tell the truth . . ." I agree with the second contention, but the first is considerably overstated. At a minimum, it needs a bit of balance, for if excessive secrecy is damaging to any administration's desire to conduct policy, lack of secrecy can be every bit as damaging.

That the *Times's* editorialists are pretty far out on their rhetorical limb is demonstrated by the paragraph that follows the Hamilton quotations:

Dictators, not democrats, create private governments, develop private budgets by dunning the wealthy, traffic with profiteers and lie to legislatures. Tyrants, not elected public servants, decide which laws apply to them.

Aside from the histrionic language, is it possible that the gentlemen and ladies who write these things up there in New York are as ignorant of the real world as one would conclude from the paragraph above? Do they not know that ours is the only *democracy* in the world where the chief executive does not have a secret (and I mean secret) private fund for secret programs? Do they not know that wealthy individuals have frequently made funds available to their governments for worthy objectives? (To take just one example: shortly after the Second World War, when

West European trade unions needed money to fight Communism, the AFL—with the knowledge and approval of the executive branch—raised a considerable amount of money from distinguished American families like the Harrimans, and used it to buy printing presses, mimeograph machines, and other weapons in the ideological struggle for their European friends. I'm sure the Harrimans and the others who contributed to the program didn't think they were being "dunned"; they contributed cheerfully to save democracy. And hooray for them, the AFL, and the American government.) Do they not know that every democratic legislature in the world save ours is lied to with monotonous regularity, and rather expects it? And do they not know that every democracy save ours believes that *raison d'état* is superior to abstract morality, and hence that democratically elected rulers are entitled, from time to time, to act illegally in the name of the national interest? Do they not remember the French attack against the *Rainbow Warrior* in New Zealand? Have they not heard the stories about the behavior of MI5 in England, which apparently even spied on Prime Minister Wilson? Do they think France and Britain are dictatorships, governed by tyrants?

The Inside Poop on the Gulf War

You may have been bemused, as I was, by the Administration's reaction to the Iraqi attack against an American warship in the Persian Gulf. It does seem odd, after all, that after Iraq attacks our Navy, we respond by threatening . . . Iran. I also wondered at our eagerness to accept the claims from Iraq that the attack was an accident, and at first I thought, well, here we have the pro-Arab characters in the State Department doing it to us once again. But I was almost certainly wrong about that, because it turns out that Loren Jenkins, ace Middle East investigative journalist of the *Washington Post*, gave the Iranians credit for accidentally attacking a Soviet freighter a month before. On May 14, Jenkins wrote from Tehran:

A Soviet freighter, the Ivan Koroteyev, was attacked a week ago and severely damaged by "unknown" forces—believed to be an Iranian gunboat—as it sailed through the gulf toward Kuwait. *But the assault was not believed here to have been the result of an official decision to move against the Russians for the first time [sic! What about the Soviet diplomats taken hostage in Lebanon, one of whom was murdered?].*

Instead, according to diplomats here, the attack seems to have been an intemperate—and probably unauthorized—action by a group of Revolutionary Guards operating, as they often do, outside the military chain of command.

There you see! It's quite all right, because the attack was unauthorized. And how does Mr. Jenkins know all this? He heard it from "diplomats here" in Tehran.

It's hard to check this sort of thing, but if the "diplomats here" are the ones who told Jenkins that the Revolutionary Guards often operate outside the

chain of command, they aren't particularly profound observers of the Persian scene. The guards are autonomous of the military, and report to the Prime Minister and the Ayatollah. So the question of authorization is totally independent of the *military* authorities.

Well, at least the *Post* editors had the decency to put it on page 27. □

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AMONG THE INTELLECTUALOIDS



LADIES' NIGHT

by David Evanier

You are a girl,
A revolutionist, a worker . . .
Against the ruling swine . . .

. . . in the Russia of today
Men and women, proud of working hours,
Sturdy . . . Clear-growing, inevitable,
Deepening in their youth. . .
—“To a Revolutionary Girl”
by Maxwell Bodenheim
New Masses, April 3, 1934

I am seated in the brown and gold auditorium of P.S. 40 in Manhattan. Rarefied air. We are in martyr heaven. Brigada Compañeras, “a women’s construction brigade to Nicaragua,” composed of “North American feminists,” is about to hold a “cultural” benefit. I read the literature: the women will build a trade school in northern Nicaragua. “All donations are tax-deductible.”

The “feminists” arrive all around me, some kissing each other on the lips. The sound system plays “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.”

Many neuter types; females in men’s shoes and socks. I have noticed two basic types at martyr gatherings: somber, hard-looking women with cropped hair, and holy types with beatific expressions. In addition here were some *big* women, a few dainty Protestant dowagers, some twenty young black women, about fifteen “males,” and one old Communist Party lady, sitting happily right up front.

“Men with blue sweat socks, I want to f--- ya,” reads poetess Donna Masini, recipient of a New York Foundation for the Arts Grant in 1986 and an American Academy of Poets Award in 1986 and 1987. She drinks from a Perrier bottle.

He f--- like a xerox machine, back and forth. . . .

I do not need to be turned on. I turn on myself.
[appreciative applause from audience]

Alone in my room I lie on my back
. . . Touch my body young and white and

David Evanier is completing a novel about American Communism entitled The Prince of Progressive Humanity.

hard . . . reach . . . spread my legs . . . turn over . . .

We learn of Donna’s childhood, born in Brooklyn where “even the birds were dingy.” Of her dentist, Dr. Kleinman; Catholic school (“What do nuns know about science anyway?”); bicycling across the Brooklyn Bridge: “‘Do you think we’ll have a child?’ he asks. ‘I don’t know,’ I say. ‘Do you think there is a child waiting for us?’” Donna also reflects aloud: “I guess part of writing is trying to figure out things I wish I had said when I was in that situation.”

In the school gym at intermission Donna, pretty and Italian with a plunging neckline and a necklace, receives some avid attention from the ladies. Get her down to Little Italy with some pasta, chianti, and Jimmy Roselli records, and this might be a human being.

We get down to business next. From the back of the auditorium, coming down the aisle in black shirt and green military-looking togs,

a crew-cut black woman chants, “USA, CIA, Out of Central America.” The audience joins in. This is Robbie McCauley, rap performer, “performance artist who is active in and supportive of anti-imperialist culture.”

“Rapping” this night might be defined as a form of writing that is a bastard cross between poetry and singing. It is not good enough to qualify as either one of the two.

“We’re led by fools who make the rules,” declares McCauley. “They firmly build their fascist state. . . . I wonder when will the people learn, it’s up to us to take a turn, for rev-o-lu-tion . . . rev-o-lu-tion . . .”

The audience calls out, “Whew!” and loudly applauds.

The rap artist pauses in her poetry to reflect, “It’s really hard here. . . . When I was in Nicaragua in 1983, I heard a report that a farm worker had said these words: ‘I believe the people of the United States support our revolution. And we are willing to help them [with theirs] when they need it.’” There are cheers at this.

In her next riff, “Contradiction,” she states:

. . . Illuminate the duality
the unity of opposites
the harmony of contradictions
and vice versa. . . .

Don’t identify with the dying class
Don’t identify with the dying class
Don’t identify with the dying class
Negate the negation. Negate the negation.
Anti-imperialist at last.

McCauley concludes her poetics: “The tremendous wealth of the U.S. empire was made from the land, sweat, blood and stillborn dreams, the coal, iron ore and illiteracy . . . the captive market of colonized and neocolonized and other oppressed people around the world. I’m talkin’ about black and brown and red people and Asians over here too. We make up almost 80 percent of the people in U.S. jails. The black people were 38 out of 40 shot down by L.A. police one year. I’m talkin’ about prison and the threat of prison. That’s what America is, said Malcolm. Prison, in a racist system. Where the haves control everything. And the havenots have to beg for everything.”

This melange of half-baked statistics, miseducation, cartoon rhetoric, and poster propaganda comes to an end. She goes back down the aisle chanting, “USA, CIA, Out of Central America.”

I spend intermission in the gym, where there appear to be drawings by children on pro-Sandinista themes. But I look again. The bright yellow and orange colors have misled me. These are by adults. Communist Party art exhibits are also often like this. I read the words on the posters: “I grew up on a farm where I lived in the snow. Now I live in Brooklyn where I work with friends for peace and justice.” There are posters from Women in Self-Help, Women Together, Brooklyn Women Anti-Rape Exchange, Solidarity With Nicaragua, and Brooklyn Sisters City Project. The literature on the tables is from the vast network of pro-Sandinista groups around the country, including the National Central American



Health Rights Network (NCAHRN), which claims forty U.S. groups. NCAHRN announces a conference with such topics as "Mental Health and War," "Health Sistering/People to People Contacts," "Birthing With Women in Nicaragua," and "Earthquakes and Classquakes."

The star of the night is Safiya Henderson-Holmes, "poet, writer," winner of the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in poetry in 1986. One of the people she dedicates her reading to is Sandy Pollack, the Communist Party activist who died in a plane crash in Cuba. A pretty black woman in her early thirties with green earrings, holding a red rose, she has just returned from Cuba. She tells us that even the ants are safe there, and the cows are the healthiest she's ever seen.

She is billed as giving a "poetry/performance." She sings, raps, chants,

talks. "I've been out of the country. Life after Cuba is hard, especially if the playback is the U.S. . . . In Cuba you move safely . . . listen to the birds sing . . . So many voices telling me it's going to be all right . . . it's safe to walk and dream . . . earth is at peace there . . . without fear, without greed, even the ants . . ."

She intersperses her talk with a musical version of "Venceremos."

She punches out a cheer: "Booma Cheeia! Booma Cheeia! Nicaragua! Nicaragua! *Rah rah rah!*"

"Here in Cuba, in Lenin Park . . . allowed to feel so much . . . we worked the land again . . . blessed it with our sweat . . . a pure life . . . yesterday I smoked the pipe with our native American sister . . . we prayed in the sun in front of the healthiest cows I'd ever seen . . . at the Pioneer Palace the children were making radical discover-

ies, testing mosquitoes and sugar cane. Discovering how to survive . . ."

She utilizes rhetorical chants and litanies: "Did I tell you," she asks again and again, "how the children smiled and waved goodbye in Lenin Park . . . how their skirts were red and gold . . . their eyes were worldwide? . . . To eat in Lenin Park! . . . The last day in the fields, we cried, I will be back, red earth of Cuba! I will be back . . ."

Safiya's mood shifts from ecstasy to anger. She is back in the USA. She sees people on cheese lines. "We need peace, y'all . . . not a flash in the pan, not a one night stand. We're talking more than cheese—more hospitals, books, schools, teachers, theaters, museums . . . We're talkin' world, y'all, *Call it*. A people organized, galvanized, solarized, socialized, sanctified, computerized, dignified, never again hor-

rified. *Stand on line for that, Jack.*"

She talks more and more rapidly, and angrily, snarling out the words. "Who gave Grenada a break? Who and what did Maurice Bishop take . . . Peace, you better call it . . . Bill Cosby is not enough! . . . In the end the color will not be purple whoever directs it. Peace! . . ."

"Nagasaki is a Birmingham church, call it . . . Nagasaki is a Manhattan welfare hotel, call it . . . Nagasaki is a drunken man on the subway, call it, call it, you better call it, you better call it, you better push it, pull it, grab it, you better call it, call it, call it. *Call it, peace y'all.*" Her fist is now clenched high in the air. "Call it, call it, call it, b-b-b-better call it, you b-b-b-better push it, pull it, grab it, Venceremos, we will win." Her voice rises to a howl. The crowd rises to its feet and howls with her. □

SPECTATOR'S JOURNAL

HOLY MACAU

by William McGurn

Macau

High above the tired banyan trees, ramshackle huts, and decaying colonial mansions that ring the coastline of this little patch of land off mainland China, night shrugs and makes way for daybreak. Cats yawn and stretch; sandaled merchants pull back the tarps covering their counterfeit Gucci bags and Lacoste shirts; the walls sweat with humidity. On a wooden bench along the Praia Grande, an elderly Chinese picks his feet.

Had Kipling ever visited this tiny Portuguese territory—two small islands and a jagged peninsula at the mouth of the Pearl River—he would have had to revise his judgment about the twain of East and West. For along with the bottles of *vinho verde*, the locals have also imported the Portuguese word *amanha*; strictly speaking it means "tomorrow" but a better translation is "not today," an Iberian temper that nicely complements the natural languor of the Asian tropics. When in 1842 the British set up their own shop in nearby Hong Kong, which lured away the serious China traders with its better ports and facilities, the administration here competed in admirable Latin fashion by legalizing gambling and horse racing, an industry that now accounts for about a fifth of the is-

land's gross domestic product. So it goes today, six square miles of open-air markets, ancient Buddhist temples, 24-hour blackjack, quaint Portuguese chapels, jai alai, and an imitation Folies Bergère called the Crazy Paris Show.

This is the land the sailors claimed for Portugal four centuries ago as "the City of the Name of God There Is None More Loyal," Macau. It is also the place Lisbon has just agreed to cede to China on December 20, 1999.

With no airport and a population of only 426,000, Macau but for a twist of geopolitical fate might have remained the picturesque retreat from the chrome-and-bustle of Anglo-Saxon Hong Kong it had become: a place whose Old World charms make the many inconveniences of the Older World somewhat tolerable. Although Macau has more than its share of hideous glass boxes, it has managed to retain a seedy dignity through the ochre-and-cream-colored colonial buildings it keeps in the same state of splendid disrepair as those in Mother Lisbon. For anyone who wants both comfort and character, there is even a tastefully refurbished seventeenth-century Portuguese fort, where guests can relax in medieval splendor (and modern air conditioning) for less than the cost of a night at your average Howard John-

son's. Unfortunately the cobbled floors and romantic aura of the place attract a particularly noxious modern-day pest, the professional British expatriate, such as the creature who made his appearance on the verandah one evening. Very much in the cups, he grilled the helpless staff about Macau's governor, the patronizing tone embarrassing even his Chinese mistress but making the rest of us look wonderful by comparison.

Like that British gentleman, most of Macau's 4.6 million annual visitors pop over from Hong Kong, which at only fifty-five minutes by jetfoil is a far cry from the proverbial slow boat to China. And in this proximity lies a sorry tale, because Macau is the first of the two remaining capitalist dominoes (the other is Taiwan) to fall from the Sino-British accord that will see Peking get its hands back on Hong Kong come 1997. Indeed, not two days after the draft agreement on Macau's future was initialed this past spring, China's vice premier, Yao Yilin, said that although Peking hoped Taiwan would now come along quietly, the mainland "had not excluded non-peaceful means" to reclaim its wayward child.

As for Hong Kong, although there are plenty of good reasons for maintaining the status quo (not least the desire of the colony's people), the deal that hands it back to China was at least based on an earlier agreement signed

by Her Majesty's representatives when they first arrived in Asia. But Macau had no such expired lease. Unlike the British, who didn't get out this way until the middle of the last century, the Portuguese had pretty much stolen Macau fair and clear by 1563, even formally annexing it in 1887. Probably because it could maintain effective control over Macau by controlling the land border gate with the mainland through which the territory's food came, China's Ming Dynasty attached no time conditions on the Portuguese. In other words, the only reason China "deserves" Macau back is by virtue of China's claim to sovereignty over all lands once Chinese—a claim not entirely unlike that advanced by a certain European nation just four decades ago. That, plus the precedent of Hong Kong and the veiled threat of a Sino *Anschluss* (all the more possible with Britain out of the picture), sealed Macau's fate.

Not that Lisbon was inclined to fight. For the past two decades, the territory has been dominated by a pro-Peking faction of businessmen, legislators, trade unions, and teachers who have not exactly encouraged debate. Back in 1974, moreover, a new left-wing government in Lisbon, flush from its near-bloodless overthrow of the old dictatorship, even tried to give Macau back. But China worried that a premature acquisition might jeopardize its

William McGurn is deputy editorial page editor of the Asian Wall Street Journal.

designs on the prize jewel of Hong Kong. Probably, too, Peking figured (correctly) that it could regain Macau at its leisure, something made easier by the unilateral Portuguese decision to renounce sovereignty and designate Macau "a Chinese territory under Portuguese administration" after the giveaway was rebuffed.

Nevertheless, amid their hasty retreat from Asia the Portuguese did manage one concession in the way of honor the British specifically excluded: passports. Unlike the British, who introduced a special second-class citizenship passport that would allow Hong Kong residents to travel to but not settle in Britain, Portuguese law will recognize nationality claims of almost 100,000 Macau residents, which gives them the right of abode in Portugal if they so

choose. This has Britain worried, because under European Community law these Chinese could move anywhere in Europe now that Portugal is an EC member. Having closed that avenue to all except a handful of well-connected Hong Kong citizens, London fears that a lax or corrupt administration in Macau, not impossible to imagine here, could make the acquisition of a Portuguese passport by Hong Kong Chinese relatively easy. Recently, in fact, some Portuguese officials have been arrested for selling illegal passports, with the going rate said to be in the neighborhood of \$5,000.

In the rush to de-Westernize Asia through the purging of its colonial powers, the world is overlooking the

crucial point that whatever measure of individual rights and freedoms Asia aspires to owes itself to Western ideals. Centuries ago Western traders made this Portuguese enclave the richest entrepôt in the world, and as the Asian base of Christianity its bishop once boasted jurisdiction over "the whole province of China, as also the islands of Japan and Macau, together with the other islands adjacent." Today the ruins of the Jesuit basilica Sao Paulo's—whose grand stone facade, carved largely by exiled Japanese Christians in the seventeenth century, is all that remains—is the perfect metaphor for Macau's faded glory. The many Chinese refugees who fled here after the 1949 upheavals on the mainland are now finding the European powers as devoid of substance as this

facade, having all the wrong virtues and none of the right vices proper to leadership today. Of all the improbabilities, only Taiwan, with its strong military and newfound prosperity, is safe from having its future signed away by white men in far-off Western capitals.

Meanwhile, in the cobbled streets and gaming parlors of Macau, residents await a future that most had resigned themselves to when Britain yielded on Hong Kong. It was Pascal who once suggested that history might have been very different had Cleopatra's nose been shorter. But it will be left to future historians to suggest that Macau's own sorry fate might have been very different had Margaret Thatcher's back been a little stiffer. □

THE TALKIES



TOUGH GUYS

by Bruce Bawer

About halfway through *The Untouchables*, equable T-man Eliot Ness (Kevin Costner), who's involved in a sanguinary war with the bootlegging empire of Al Capone (Robert De Niro), erupts in unaccustomed anger when a thug refuses to drop his piece and Ness is forced to blow him away. "What is this?" Ness cries. "A game?"

Precisely—or so, at least, the film's director, Brian De Palma, and writer, David Mamet, want us to believe. For at the end of the film, the risks, sacrifices, and deaths (Ness loses two members of his three-man squad of "untouchables" to Capone's gunmen) are made to seem meaningless. Yes, Capone's finally headed for the Big House. But so what? The Windy City's still crawling with corrupt characters—including the judge, jurors, and cops who, but for Ness's heroic efforts, would've gotten Capone off. As Ness's pal Malone (Sean Connery) observes, the only man Ness can really trust is Ness—and even *he's* not perfectly virtuous, and he knows it. He even goes so far as to claim that he's become just like the people he's been stalking; in the

judge's chambers during Capone's trial he admits, "I've broken every law I've sworn to uphold." What's more, the law that he's dedicated himself to enforcing—the Volstead Act—is one in which he doesn't seem to believe; as he tells a roomful of police recruits, having a drink now and then may not be a bad thing—what's important is not right vs. wrong but legal vs. illegal. In the penultimate line of the movie, a reporter says to Ness, "They're going to repeal prohibition. What will you do then?" Ness's reply: "I think I'll have

a drink." And he strides away from the camera, like the conventional Western hero riding off into the sunset. But De Palma and Mamet want our admiration for him to be mixed with a sense that all of his heroic efforts have come to very little, that his heroism is tinged with absurdity.

Indeed, as he is portrayed in this film, Ness is a bit absurd—ingenuously dedicated to law and order and unquestioningly patriotic. He's not unlike Ed Harris's John Glenn in *The Right Stuff*—a clean-cut, gee-whiz, all-American

square. He has a wife, but all we really know about her is that she is pleasant, loyal, and antiseptically attractive, and that she and Ness love each other very much; her part in his life consists mostly of looking concerned when he is in trouble, of leaving town in police custody (with their young daughter) when Ness decides that her life is in danger, and of beaming proudly from her seat on the aisle when he triumphs over Capone in the courtroom. "Are you married?" Ness asks a cop during a stakeout, and when the cop replies that he is, Ness says—in an incredibly wholesome tone—"It's good to be married, isn't it?" Later in the film, virtually the same line comes out of the mouth of Malone, a bachelor.

But *why* is it good to be married? We're not going to find out from this film; the important interaction here is not between male and female, but between male and male. (Significantly, though *he* is married, Ness wants all of his "untouchables" to be bachelors.) It might be said, in fact, that on one level *The Untouchables* is a study in the way men relate to each other. Although Ness and his wife are hardly seen touching in the film, there are scenes aplenty which find Ness in a tight, riveting, almost erotically intense eye-to-eye two-shot with some other man.



Bruce Bawer is The American Spectator's movie reviewer and the author of *The Middle Generation* and *The Contemporary Stylist*.

The film develops largely through a series of confrontations between men. When Ness first meets Malone they argue; when the two of them first meet Stone (another "untouchable"), Malone tries to provoke Stone's anger with ethnic slurs. Yet beneath the surface of each of these encounters one senses a strong personal attraction—these men are not simply confronting one another, they're sizing each other up, engaged in a sort of male version of a mating ritual. Even Ness and Capone—who come face to face twice, very dramatically—have between them a provocatively ambiguous chemistry. (There are, furthermore, some sequences—for example, the one in which Capone fondles a baseball bat while speechifying at a dozen or so of his tuxedoed cronies—that one can hardly avoid reading as homoerotic.)

Since *The Untouchables* is a Brian De Palma film, it is not only about Eliot Ness and Al Capone but about movies and moviemaking; like previous De Palma films it's set not in the real world—or to be specific, in the director's version thereof, where real-world values apply—but in a *movie* world, a deliberate never-never land of De Palma's imagination where style is nearly everything and moral questions are largely irrelevant. From the very first scene—an overhead shot of Capone in a barber's chair (cf. *Scarface*) being interviewed by reporters—the camera angles call attention to themselves. And they're *supposed* to: De Palma doesn't want us to forget for a second that this is a movie. This is why his camera never seems to sit still: he wants us to be aware constantly that there *is* a camera.

At one point, for instance, De Palma trains his camera upon a circular table at which the "untouchables" are seated, and then sends the camera spinning completely around the table, panning from face to face as it does so. The purpose of this shot may be defensible—De Palma may mean to point up these men's isolation from the world and their devotion to each other (Stanley Kramer made very effective use of such a shot for a similar purpose near the end of *On the Beach*, when he revolved his camera around the dancing, doomed protagonists portrayed by Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner)—but there are so many distracting camera movements of this sort in *The Untouchables* that after a while one wants to scream, "Enough already!" Similarly, the musical score (by Ennio Morricone) is often excessively dramatic, and several of the performances (notably De Niro's) are almost ludicrously overdrawn—all of which is, of course, in the classic De Palma tradition. Even

Costner, in his magnificently minimalist performance as Ness, comes dangerously close to excess—i.e., to overdoing his underplaying.

Nor has De Palma grown tired of perpetrating his famous *homages* to great directors and films of the past. Given a choice between creating an original, realistic sequence and contriving a derivative one with an immediately recognizable filmic antecedent, he'll do the latter every time. For example, when Ness is waiting for a Capone bookkeeper to show up at Chicago's Union Station, and a woman and baby carriage appear at the foot of a nearby staircase, one knows immediately that De Palma is setting up an *homage* to the famous pram sequence in *Potemkin*. Yet despite its derivativeness, this sequence is wonderfully effective—perhaps the best thing in the movie, in fact. The set-up—in typical De Palma fashion—is long and uneventful (remember Angie Dickinson's endless trek through the museum corridors in *Dressed to Kill*?), but once the action starts, so much happens in such a brief stretch of real time that De Palma shows it to us in slow motion so that we can take it all in. And, one might add, so that we can be impressed by the sequence's thrilling choreography. It's almost as if De Palma's playing teacher, offering us a sort of film-school anatomy lesson—a slow-motion dissection of a top-notch crime-film shoot-out. De Palma is in truth an academic sort of director, a man whose films, like the work of some academic poets, are extraordinarily contrived and extraordinarily conscious of their influences.

Needless to say, this tendency to devote more attention to coy allusions and camera tricks than to character development and dramatic structure has seriously weakened many of De Palma's films. But I was very pleasantly surprised by the degree to which *The Untouchables* held up in spite of this cinemacentric sensibility. For the truth is that, despite its superficiality and cynicism, this film is wonderfully entertaining. The story builds extremely well; there are virtually no dead spots; the editing and cinematography are impeccable; and the performances by Costner and Connery are truly impressive. Moreover, there are half a dozen action and suspense sequences each of which is so nearly perfect of its kind that, if it were transplanted into a typical contemporary crime picture, it would without question be the film's highlight. *The Untouchables* is, in short, a contrivance—but a decidedly first-rate one.

...

Like *The Untouchables*, *River's Edge* is based on a story of

violence and retribution. But in tone and purpose the film—which was directed by Tim Hunter and written by Neal Jimenez—could hardly be more different from De Palma's glossy entertainment. *River's Edge* is based on a bizarre 1981 incident in a small northern California town: a high-school boy killed his girlfriend and showed several friends her dead body—which he'd left exposed on the banks of the local river—but none of them was as outraged or horrified as one might expect them to be; they continued to attend school, to hang out and party, and days passed before anyone reported the crime. The film focuses upon the murderer, a fat psychopath named Samson, a.k.a. John (Daniel Roebuck), and upon his circle of friends, who are unable to recognize Samson's madness or to be deeply affected by his murder of their friend Jamie.

It's not that they're particularly scummy kids; indeed, most of them, though their lives revolve around dope and acid rock, would under ordinary circumstances probably pass as relatively decent. But something inside them is dead: they're unable to react to the murder with the grief and horror that normal civilized people would be

expected to experience. To her credit, a girl named Clarissa is at least able to recognize her own inability to feel: she notes that she cried when "that guy in *Brian's Song*" died; why isn't she crying now? What is so remarkable about this film is that it makes these kids' anomie utterly believable. Even as one laughs—and, perversely, one cannot help laughing loud and long—at some of the extraordinarily insensitive remarks of some of the kids, one is profoundly disturbed. Indeed, I don't remember ever seeing a film that disturbed me the way this one did. *Blue Velvet* came closest, but one was able to remind oneself, after experiencing its emotionally devastating (and, at the same time, weirdly funny) vision of the heart of small-town darkness, that it was a fiction; with *River's Edge* one has no such consolation.

What made these kids this way? The film places a good deal of the blame—and convincingly so—on the values and life-styles that became popular during, and continue to be associated with, the sixties. For the sixties mentality, in one way or another, seems to be responsible for the character of the adults who play the most significant roles in these kids' lives. Take the

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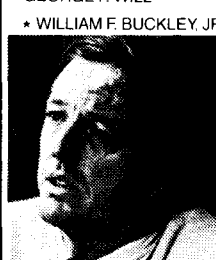
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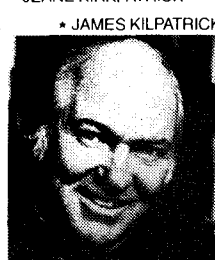
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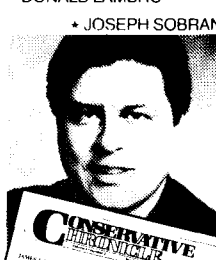
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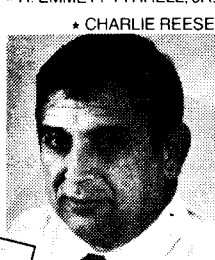
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mother of Matt (Keann Reeves)—a boy whose conflict of conscience becomes the film's primary focus, and who eventually turns Samson in. Matt's mom doesn't discipline her kids (even her twelve-year-old, Tim, is an earringed pothead); her house is a mess; her boyfriend lives with the family (Dad, apparently, walked out years ago). And she smokes dope: when Matt runs out of joints, he dips into her stash. Then there's the kids' history teacher. He's one of those ex-hippie teachers who try to "relate" to their students and preach "relevance" and "commitment," but who don't even try to instill in their students what the kids need most desperately—worthy ambitions, moral awareness, a respect for authority and for adulthood. Significantly, the adult whom the kids most look up to is the scummiest of them all: Fack (Dennis Hopper), a grotesque, one-legged hermit who killed his girlfriend twenty years ago and who regularly provides the local teenagers with free dope.

It's Fack to whom Samson describes the exhilaration he felt when he killed Jamie: "She was there dead in front of me and I felt so fucking alive!" To these kids, feeling alive is a rare experience; apparently the only thing they have to live for is the next high. ("Sometimes," Clarissa tells Matt at one point, "I think it would be a lot easier being dead." "No, that's bullshit!" Matt argues. "You couldn't get stoned any more.") What's more, like Fack, whose only friend is a plastic sex doll, none of them is really close to anybody. They think that they're one another's friends, but they don't even know the meaning of the word: Jamie, after all, was a "friend," and they can't even feel particularly bad about her death or get angry at her killer. Worst of all is Layne, a wiry, wild-eyed pill-popper who's almost as crazy as Samson, and who is rather pleased by the murder because it seems likely to bring them all even closer to each other—in defense of their friend Samson, of course. Ironically, when Tim says, "You're gonna pay for what you did," he doesn't say it to Samson but to Matt—whose act of squealing seems more of an obscenity, according to these kids' moral code, than the murder itself.

In general, the young actors are very good, though one spends a good deal of one's time worrying about Crispin Glover's performance as Layne. It's a broad, gutsy performance (sometimes uncomfortably reminiscent of Sean Penn's Jeff Spicoli character from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*), and it may strike many viewers as *too* broad, more appropriate to a comedy than to a film like *River's Edge*. In Glover's defense, however, it must be said that there *are* young people who behave exactly like

his Layne—who deliver lines with the same Valley-boy drawl, who indulge in the same broad gestures, who have the same dopey-eyed look.

River's Edge is the most frightening American film to come along in many a year—and it is frightening not because it makes us believe in an implausible tale of horror, but because it opens our eyes to a horror story that happened in our midst, and that—in a very real sense—is all around us still.

• • •

Yet another story of a real-life murder—and of its bizarre background—is told in the British film *Prick Up Your Ears*. The film, a biography of the irreverent sixties playwright Joe Orton, has been elegantly directed by Stephen Frears (*My Beautiful Laundrette*) from a literate script by Alan Bennett. Bennett's script is based upon the 1978 book of the same title by John Lahr. Like the book, the film is actually a dual biography, telling the story not only of Orton—a Leicester working-class boy who found the world of his parents bleak and unimaginative and fatuously conventional—but of Kenneth Halliwell, seven years his elder, whom he met at age eighteen when they were both acting students at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, and who became the most important person in his life.

"When Orton met Halliwell in 1951," Lahr writes, "he found a surrogate brother and formed the only family he would ever acknowledge." Orton also found in Halliwell the lover with whom he would spend the rest of his short life, and the mentor who would introduce him to the classics and to writing. For several years after they'd left RADA, the two of them, sharing a room in then-unfashionable Islington, collaborated on novels (which they couldn't get published) as well as on fake blurbs for the jackets of library books (a prank which landed them both in prison for several months); for years they were nothing more than misfits, weirdos, a couple of losers.

Then everything changed. In 1963 a play Orton had written, *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, was produced in the West End and became a huge hit. Suddenly Orton was the toast of London. *Loot*, an even bigger hit, followed. Then, on August 9, 1967—soon after the thirty-four-year-old Orton had completed a play called *What the Butler Saw*—Halliwell took a hammer and smashed open Orton's skull, splattering his brain on the apartment's wall and ceiling. Halliwell then took twenty-two Nembutals with a grapefruit juice chaser.

Lahr's book opens with the murder-suicide; so does the movie. It's Orton's murder, after all, which makes Orton's

life interesting—that, and the outrageous sexual escapades which he recorded carefully in his diaries. (*The Orton Diaries*, as I write this, is number one on the *Village Voice Literary Supplement* best-seller list—a reasonably good index of what's selling in literary bookstores in New York, where the film's been playing for several weeks; a reissue of *Prick Up Your Ears* stands at number six on the paperback list.) As for Orton's plays, which Lahr discusses at length (most of the second half of his book is devoted to plot summary and analysis), they are given relatively short shrift by Frears; a viewer who doesn't have much sense of what they are like will leave the theater with little more than a vague notion that Orton's work is as outrageous as he was.

And how outrageous was he? This the film shows us in spades. Leaving his mother's funeral, Orton (Gary Oldman) picks up a fat, unsavory workman at the bus stop and loves him up in a nearby abandoned building. Later he takes his mother's false teeth and hands them to an actor in *Loot* to use as a stage prop. After accepting an award at a formal ceremony, Orton heads for a Holloway Road *pissoir* where he sets his statuette down on the floor and proceeds to have sex, in the dark, with half a dozen or so strangers. Rich and successful, he and Halliwell (Alfred Molina) fly to North Africa and surround themselves with scantily clad teenaged boys.

This is not, in short, *The Life of Emile Zola*. But it is unarguably a fascinating film. Despite all of the outrageous antics, though, what is most interesting to watch is the series of subtle transformations in the relationship between Orton and Halliwell. (Frears seems to specialize in the sociology of offbeat homosexual couples.) When they first meet, Halliwell is the sophisticated older man, Orton the cocky provincial boy whom he takes under his wing; but after *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, Halliwell essentially takes on the role of Mrs. Orton—a cranky, prissy, neglected consort who cooks and answers the phone and identifies himself officially as the playwright's secretary. In the role of the cocky, narcissistic Orton (to whom he bears a remarkable resemblance), Oldman is splendid. As for the bald, bearlike Molina (whom fans of bad English cinema will remember as a Russian sailor in *Letter to Brezhnev*), he is certainly a compelling performer, but even when he is playing Halliwell as a young, relatively stable man at RADA he is already so scary and crazy-looking that one cannot for a moment understand Orton's attraction to him. (To

judge by photographs, the real Halliwell was actually quite pleasant-looking—with, by the way, a much better-looking toupee than the one that Frears has slapped on Molina.)

Interpolated in the film are several sequences that take place years after Orton's death, and depict John Lahr's (Wallace Shawn) meetings with various survivors preparatory to the writing of his biography. Wallace Shawn—who is probably best known to audiences from *My Dinner with Andre*, and as the "little homunculus" in *Manhattan*—is, I suppose, a good actor; but his peculiar appearance, voice, and mannerisms are highly disconcerting, and make it difficult to accept him as anybody other than Wallace Shawn. (Put it this way: If anybody hired him to play *me*, I'd sue.) The main link between these sequences and the body of the film is Peggy Ramsay (Vanessa Redgrave), Orton's agent, who provides Lahr with the playwright's diaries and shares her memories of Orton. Miss Redgrave handles this role quite professionally, but she is less a performer here than she is a lovely and stately presence: she seems to spend most of her screen time stepping elegantly out of cabs, applauding elegantly at awards dinners, and sitting elegantly at her desk. (I know the English are a lot classier than we are—but an *agent*?)

Why has Stephen Frears included these sequences? For one thing, he seems to be interested in pointing up the contrast between the low-key bourgeois life-style of John Lahr, Typical Writer, and the self-destructive, fast-lane life-style of Joe Orton, Literary Rebel (who, incidentally, started his life as John—he changed his first name, at Peggy Ramsay's suggestion, to avoid confusion with John Osborne). For another thing, Frears apparently wants to suggest a parallel between Lahr's wife—a devoted secretary-cook-typist whom Lahr takes for granted—and Halliwell. The sequences serve useful transitional purposes, too; and perhaps Frears also felt that these relatively low-intensity sequences would provide necessary breathers between high-intensity sequences about Orton. And perhaps he was right; but, though the Lahr segments are of interest, they don't strike me as having been worth the trouble, and certainly don't do much for the film's unity.

On the whole, however, *Prick Up Your Ears* is a very impressive film, a thought-provoking contemplation—like *My Beautiful Laundrette*—upon the themes of love, resentment, poverty, and violence. It provides further evidence—if any is needed—of the extraordinary inventiveness and sensitivity of Stephen Frears's directorial imagination. I look forward eagerly to his next project. □

BOOK REVIEWS

Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, who used to be employed as a live-in couple in Washington, have written a book. Actually, it's more than a book. Around my house *Everything to Gain* has become a complete home entertainment center. Using the Carter opus, I've developed no less than five swell new parlor games. They are better than Trivial Pursuit, charades, and Nude Scruples combined. The rules are printed below. Try them yourself.

D-U-M DUMB

The object of D-U-M Dumb is to find the dumbest sentence in *Everything to Gain*. And, let me tell you, it's a toughie. The book is passed around and each player notes a passage. The winner is determined by the amount of laughter in the room when the quotation is read.

In case of a tie, handicap points are subtracted according to the "dumbness potential" of the section of the book from which the quote was drawn. *E to G* is divided into little bits and pieces, some written by Jimmy and Rosalynn together, some by Jimmy alone, and some by Rosalynn all by herself. Of course, the dumber the section, the easier it is to find a dumb quote in it. Professional help seems to have been applied to the parts written in duet. These get a handicap of -1. Dim Jimmy gets a handicap of -2. Learning-impaired Rosalynn gets -4. Cover blurbs and dust jacket copy, written by actual literate humans, get no handicap.

There are two game categories, "Form" and "Content."

Overall winner of the first D-U-M Dumb tournament and undefeated champion to date in the "Content" category is Ms. D. B., a New York TV executive. Even though D. B. was working with a Rosalynn quotation and, hence, a -4 handicap, no one has yet been able to top the gem she found on page 59:

I have worked with problems of the mentally afflicted for years, ever since I first became aware of the needs while campaigning for Jimmy for governor.

D. B.'s victory was, however, marred by a rules protest. A fellow contestant held that this sentence properly belonged in

P. J. O'Rourke is Rolling Stone magazine's investigative humorist. His most recent books are Republican Party Rep-tile (*Atlantic Monthly Press*) and The Bachelor Home Companion (*Pocket Books*).

EVERYTHING TO GAIN: MAKING THE MOST OF THE REST OF YOUR LIFE

Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter/Random House/\$16.95

P. J. O'Rourke

a third, "Honest Confessions" category. D. B. replied to the challenge by offering an alternative Rosalynn quote, "We need people for shelving (which I learned was putting books back on the shelves) . . ."

I myself am a top competitor in the "Form" category. I won my last match with this topic sentence:

Their search for a new life over the next few years led them eventually to Koinonia Farms, a non-profit farm that uses its income to help the needy, not far from Plains.

That nosed out another -1 handicap entry backed by my lawyer:

And having our mothers close by to call or visit every day was a particular joy.

D-U-M can be played with children, even pre-schoolers, since the Carter prose style makes advanced reading skills unnecessary.

FINISH THAT THOUGHT

The object of this game is to find a

Carter thought (be sure to allow adequate time!) and take it to its logical conclusion. Examples are given below with the contestants' additional material marked in italics:

It was good therapy . . . to be able to go to my shop and design, cut, fit, and finish a piece that was useful, permanent, and sometimes beautiful—or just to bang on something *the way I used to bang on the economy.*

We savored the different seasons of nature and gathered wild fruits, such as plums, blackberries, mayhaws, grapes, blueberries, and persimmons that grow along or near the rural trails, *paths, pathways, tracks, walks, passages, by-paths, lanes, roads, and routes.*

I even surprised myself with some of the things I could write. *Words, for instance. All spelled out and everything.*

When together for meals . . . our family almost invariably had freewheeling political discussions or arguments on controversial issues of the day. Quite early, Amy learned to join in and *that's how we figured out what to do about the Iran hostages.*

Sometimes an unpleasant or even catastrophic event can transform one's life and reveal opportunities that could never have been envisioned. *Take Hiroshima . . .*

That night when we called [Amy] to dinner and she didn't come, we found her outside in a tree *eating bananas with Abbie Hoffman.*

So often, the best therapy for a mentally ill person is just knowing that someone cares. *So Jimmy and I gave John Hinckley a call.*

RIPOSTE

This is similar to Finish That Thought, but, instead of adding material to different passages, a single passage is read and players compete to see who can come up with the most appropriate response. Examples:

I had so much information written down about the earlier period of my life that I didn't have room to include much of it in my book. For instance, I learned that my daddy's mother climbed out the window at age sixteen and eloped with a traveling salesman named Mr. Smith, who was crippled and twenty-five years older than she was. I'm saving these anecdotes for our grandchildren.

Thank you.

Marriage was not seriously considered with girls known to "go all the way."

Which must have made for great honeymoons.

I've already mentioned that Jimmy also has an amazing capacity to sleep all night, even in times of incredible pressure.

And the nation rested easier, too, knowing the son of a bitch was off duty for at least eight hours every day.

My wife has never been more beautiful than when her face was covered with black smut from scraping burned ceiling joists, and streaked with sweat from carrying sheets of plywood . . .

Okay, okay, we believe you.

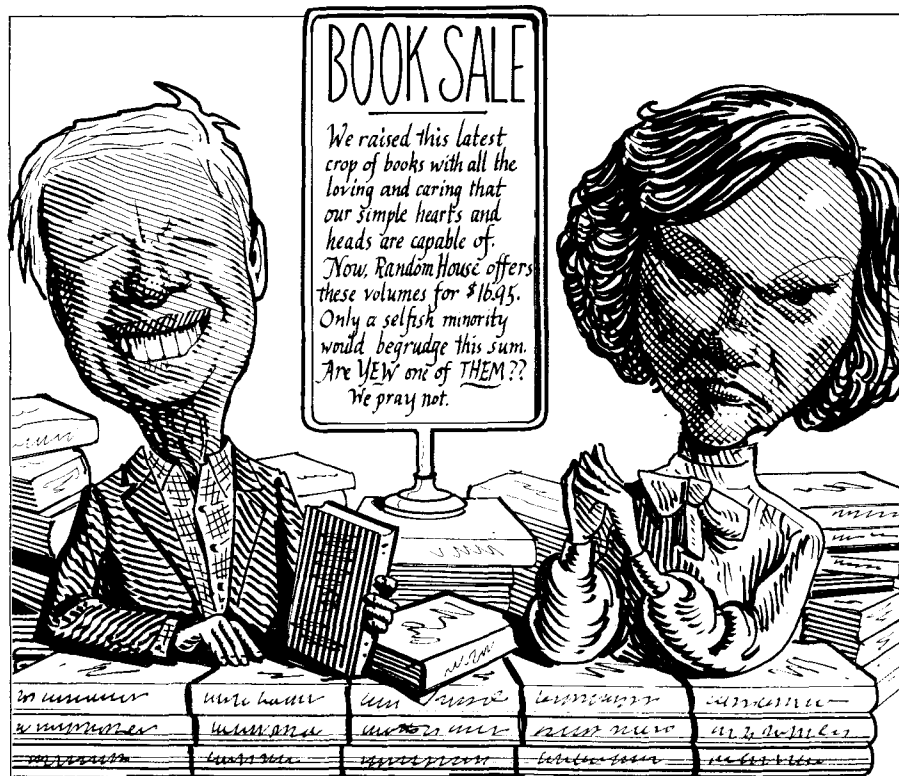
We needed a lot more volunteers in 1980! *Pal, what you needed was votes.*

YOU DON'T SAY

In this game, selections of incredibly loony, puerile, and ignorant prose are written on a piece of paper. Players then try to guess whether the selections come from *Everything to Gain* or from something else, such as the latest Andrea Dworkin tract, *Intercourse*, or a *Washington Post* op-ed page article. Here's a sample game card:

On Japanese War Guilt

When I was young and in high school, during World War II, I thought Hirohito was the cruelest man in the world next to Hitler. I blamed the whole Pacific conflict on him.



Years later . . . we went to Tokyo and called on a sweet little elderly man, who raised flowers in his hothouses at the palace. . . . This was Emperor Hirohito—as far removed from my conception of him as he possibly could have been!

- ☐ The Carters
☐ Barbara Walters

On the Sandinistas and U.S. Foreign Policy

A Habitat project was started in northwest Nicaragua in 1985. . . . Habitat volunteers

are teaching the local people how to build good homes—without interference.

- ☐ The Carters
☐ *The Village Voice*

On Watergate and Its Aftermath

. . . we were joined by Chuck Colson, whom we had personally never met before, but for whom we had little respect because of his statements and actions during the Watergate years. . . . We were also somewhat cynical about his supposed religious “conversion”. . . . We quickly saw that he

was at ease about his past. . . . In just a short time our remaining doubts were removed by his enthusiasm and persistence.

- ☐ The Carters
☐ Tammy Faye Bakker

On the Need For an Expanded Federal Health Care Program

By strict disciplinary measures, possible only in a totalitarian society, and using intensive educational programs and trained paramedics who work closely with village leaders, the Chinese have reduced their in-

fant mortality rate, carried out a broad immunization program, practically eradicated venereal disease, and lowered the annual population growth rate.

- ☐ The Carters
☐ Mao Tse-tung

On Tibetan Buddhism, Not

Heretofore Known To Be Polytheistic

I have memories of prayer wheels, large and small, which spin prayers up to heaven, and of prayer flags that flap their messages to the gods . . .

- ☐ The Carters
☐ Shirley MacLaine

On Soviet-American Relations

During the service different members of the Soviet delegation were called on to speak, and each said that though we have different languages, there is room for friendship and peaceful coexistence. The very conservative residents of this north Georgia community listened intently to the interpreter, and, when the speeches were over, spontaneously rose to their feet in a standing ovation.

- ☐ The Carters
☐ TASS

If you guessed “The Carters” on all six selections, you win.

I’ve also invented a great Carter Book Drinking Game. You just open the book at random and, boy, do you need a drink.

So that’s *Everything to Gain*—a perfect ice-breaker for any party and enjoyed by family members of all ages. But what—you may be asking—is the book *about*? It’s about 198 pages. Ha. Ha. Ha. Excuse me. Spend a couple hours with Jimmy and Roz and you get silly. I don’t know what the hell the book’s about. I mean, I read it and everything, but I haven’t got the faintest damn idea. It just sounded to me like a couple of prissy old ratchet-jaw hicks yammering away about nothing until you wanted to stuff them head-first through the outhouse seat.

Maybe we’d better ask the *New York Times*. After all, the *New York Times* is so much smarter than the rest of us. Let’s see . . . here we go, the May 31st issue of the *NYT Book Review*. Therein a certain Letty Cottin Pogrebin casts an over-educated eye upon the Carter tome and concludes it’s “. . . autobiography that is part confession, part pep talk and part handbook for activism . . . an inspiring account of the creation of a meaningful life.” I don’t know if we should listen to a woman from a family so obviously bad at spelling, but, what the heck, let’s take Letty Cottin Pogrebin’s word for it. Any questions? I don’t want to keep seeing the same hands.

You know, the Carters may be onto something here—autobiography/confession/pep talk/handbook for activism *and* blueprint for meaningful life. I’d like to try one of those myself and give Jimmy a little of his own back.



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Let's see if I can do it in twenty-five words or less:

I was born in Ohio. I drink. Hooray for the Red Cross. Send contributions to 17th and D NW, Wash., 20006. Get a job, Peanut-head.

We didn't really elect this hamster President of the United States, did we? Naw, get outta here. It was *Jerry*, Jerry Ford. That was the one we elected. Jimmy, Jerry—easy to get the two mixed up. And you know how vague we Americans are about history. We've just plumb forgot which fellow we voted in.

Whoops. I looked it up. We *did* elect Jimmy Carter President. Although, I notice, we unelected him as soon as we possibly could.

So now what are we going to do with him, him and his nitwit wife? We can't go on letting them write books. It's too embarrassing. This is an industrialized, Western nation. We can't have things like this in our bookstores. We'll get drummed out of the English-Speaking League. We've got to find some other line of work for these two before they, oh God, write again.

- Television evangelists.
- Permanent guest hosts on "Hee Haw."
- Carnival side show attractions.
- Goodwill ambassadors to Sri Lanka.

Those possibilities leap to mind. But I have a better suggestion. Let's put them back in the White House.

All right, it sounds insane. But think about it for a minute. We've got all our '70s debts paid off with cheap '80s dollars. We've got low mortgage rates locked in on our houses. Now if we could just get T-bills to yield 20 percent again, we'd be fixed. We're *ready* for double-digit inflation.

Then there's the Russians. Carter would keep them worried and off balance. When you've got a guy as dumb as this in the White House, hell, he might *sit* on the button. The Soviets would be shaking.

And Carter has this remarkable peace-making ability. Reading *E to G* makes it suddenly clear how he managed the Camp David Accords. Begin and Sadat were so bored by the blubber-skulled Carter family that they were willing to do *anything* to get out of Camp David. It might just work again with Iraq and Iran.

Plus there's the matter of kick-ass patriotism which has been slipping in the aftermath of the Iran-contra hearings. With J. C. at the helm, there'd be another disaster such as the hostage crisis. That might be what we need to put some lead back in the national pencil and get us started

whooping on creepy foreigners again.

Furthermore, there'd be no obnoxious big government activism in a new Carter administration. This is because of the people Carter would appoint. As soon as they were in office they'd run down to the South African embassy to protest apartheid. And they'd get thrown into jail and wouldn't be able to cause trouble.

The country's editorial cartoons

would become hilarious again because Carter is funnier looking than Reagan. Indeed, as Jimmy gets older, he's funnier looking than *anyone*—a sort of Don Knotts of the undead.

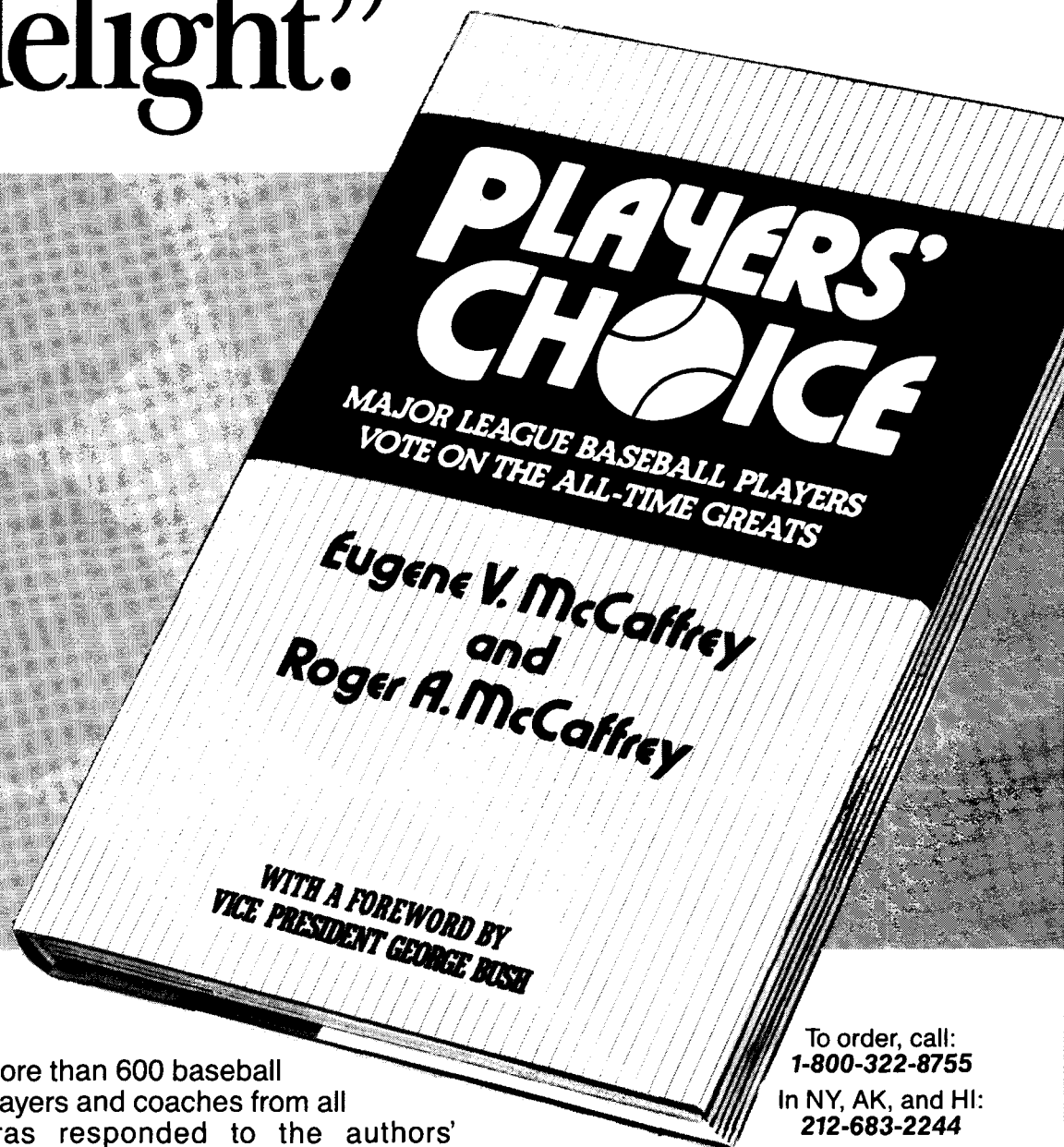
And here, *here*, is the kicker. If Jimmy comes back, Billy comes back. Damn it, don't we all miss Billy Carter!

So run right out and buy a copy of *Everything to Gain*, and write and tell Jimmy and Rosalynn just how much

fun you had with it. (I've found my copy is also great for playing fetch with the dog.) Do everything to encourage the fellow. Maybe he'll make a comeback.

It's increasingly clear that nobody in his right mind wants to be President of the United States. Therefore let's, as Rosalynn doubtless says, "go with the flow" and put somebody in the White House with no mind at all. □

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Joseph Shattan

In his great work, *Culture and Anarchy*, the Victorian poet and essayist, Matthew Arnold, drew a famous distinction between "Hebraism" and "Hellenism." Hebraism he identified with strictness of conscience; Hellenism he equated with spontaneity of consciousness. Both, he claimed, were necessary to a well-balanced life. In Victorian England, where most men's minds and characters were molded by Evangelical Christianity, Arnold believed that it was Hellenism, rather than Hebraism, that needed stressing. But in an age dominated by frivolity and cleverness—an age most Victorians could scarcely imagine—the reverse situation must obtain.

No one can say for sure what Matthew Arnold would have made of the twentieth century. From all that we know of him, it seems likely that he would have become an ardent "Hebraist"; but for obvious reasons, the question must remain moot. Fortunately, there is one "eminent Victorian" whose views we can consult. His name is Paul Johnson, and his most recent work, *A History of the Jews*, establishes him as one of the leading "Hebraists" of our time.

In calling Paul Johnson an eminent Victorian I am referring, of course, to the quality of his career as a scholar and a writer. That career has a number of strikingly Victorian attributes. To begin with, there is his profession. Most reviewers have referred to Mr. Johnson as a historical "popularizer" rather than a true historian, but that characterization, it seems to me, is wide of the mark. Mr. Johnson is actually following in the great Victorian tradition of the historian as man of letters. Like the leading historians of the Victorian age, Macaulay and Carlyle, Johnson is not a narrow specialist writing for fellow specialists. Rather, his audience is the public at large, and his aim is not only to record the past, but to help us interpret the present.

In going about this task, Mr. Johnson brings to bear two additional virtues that seem particularly Victorian: an incredible industriousness

(Mr. Johnson is the author of some twenty books and forty television films) and a temperament that is humane, assertive, and—most important—unencumbered by any trace of guilt.

Paul Johnson's most well-known book is *Modern Times*. That work might best be described as a history of the twentieth century written from the vantage point of a Victorian Englishman. Like Mr. Johnson, such an Englishman would be appalled by the lack of self-confidence that overtook Western civilization in the aftermath of the First World War; he would be contemptuous of the "relativism" by means of which Western intellectuals sought to rationalize their failure of nerve; he would be at a loss to account for the sense of guilt that crippled Western statesmen as they confronted malevolent dictators of the right and left; and finally, he might well look to a revival of the stern Hebraic spirit as an antidote to the lethargy and self-indulgence that seem to have overtaken us. In short, he would do precisely what Mr. Johnson actually has done: first write one book, *Modern Times*, explaining how we have gone wrong; then write a second book, *A History of the Jews*, suggesting how we can go right again.

In approaching Johnson's dense and erudite study of Jewish history, it is important to avoid being overwhelmed by the mass of detail necessarily contained in a work covering nearly four millennia. All things considered, it probably matters relatively little whether one knows that the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed in 720 B.C. by the Assyrian monarch Sargon II and that the Kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonian troops of Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C.; nor is a familiarity with the crimes, follies, and delusions that preceded the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth in 135 A.D. an essential part of one's liberal education. But what one ought to remember about Jewish history is that, exiled from their land and subjected to a seemingly endless round of humiliations and persecutions, the Jews have maintained and developed their civilization for nearly 2,000 years. This achievement constitutes, in Johnson's words, "a unique phenomenon." Explaining this phenomenon is perhaps the central concern of his book.

According to Johnson, Jewish history is remarkable in that the Jews never made the achievement of their own freedom and well-being into the principal goal of their collective existence. Rather, they believed that "Jewish society was appointed to be a pilot-project for the entire human race." They saw themselves as chosen by God to create the first perfect society, the prototype of all future societies. Thus, Johnson contends, "Jewish history is a record not only of physical facts but of metaphysical notions. The Jews believed themselves created and commanded to be a light to the gentiles and they have obeyed to the best of their considerable powers."

The person most responsible for this

Jewish sense of mission was Moses. "Moses is the fulcrum-figure in Jewish history, the hinge around which it all turns." Under his guidance, "the ancient Israelite society merged its interests with God's and accepted Him, in return for protection and prosperity, as a totalitarian ruler whose wishes governed every aspect of their lives."

Of course, the idea of a Jewish mission to the gentiles was not without internal contradictions and ambiguities. There was, for example, the character of the Jews themselves, which was not, according to the Bible, an exemplary one. Then there was the obvious contradiction between the pragmatic orientation of Jewish statecraft and the perfectionist demands of God's law. The Jewish prophets, as spokesmen for God, frequently took the Kings of Israel and Judah to task for their wrongdoings, but Johnson suggests that the ancient Jewish kings, struggling to keep their tiny states afloat in a stormy international environment, may have had legitimate grievances against the prophets in turn. Most puzzling of all, there was the agonizing contradiction between God's promise to exalt the Jews if they obeyed His law, and His actual behavior, which rarely seemed philo-Semitic. Nevertheless, throughout their existence Jews have persisted in believing that history has a divinely ordained meaning, and that they have a special role to play in the unfolding of God's plan. This belief, says Johnson, is the "key" to an understanding of Jewish history and survival.

Unfortunately for the Jews, Hebraic particularism eventually collided with Hellenistic universalism. "As Greek ideas about the one-ness of humanity spread," writes Johnson, "the Jewish tendency to treat non-Jews as ritually unclean, and to forbid marriage to them, was resented as being anti-humanitarian; the word 'misanthropic' was frequently used." Johnson makes the interesting point that in Babylonia, where Greek ideas had not penetrated, the apartness of the large Jewish community was not resented. But where Greek ideas did prevail, so too did anti-Semitism. Indeed, so deep was the antagonism between Hellenism and Hebraism that in 133 B.C. the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus Sidetes, was actually told by his advisers that Jerusalem should be destroyed and the Jewish people annihilated—a call for a "Final Solution," as it were, in Hellenistic rather than Teutonic accents.

The philosophical antipathy between Hellenism and Hebraism ultimately culminated in the military conflict between Judea and Rome. "It is important to grasp," Johnson observes, "that the apparent Jewish revolt against Rome was at bottom a clash between



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Jewish and Greek culture." For while the Romans accepted Greek culture and made it their own, "the only circumstances in which the Jews could have been reconciled to Greek culture was if they had been able to take it over—as, in the form of Christianity, they eventually did."

The background to that "takeover," as related by Johnson, makes for a good deal of absorbing reading, but perhaps the main point is that we, as the spiritual heirs of the Greeks, Jews, and early Christians, have inherited a civilization whose essential components do not mix together very well. It is up to us to maintain the proper balance between Hellenism and Hebraism, universalism and particularism. But what is the proper balance? And how do we tell when things are getting out of balance?

It is here, I think, that Johnson's study makes its most valuable contribution. For in recounting the history of the Jews, he is also making the much-neglected case for particularism—not just Jewish particularism, but Western particularism as well. He is reminding us that a sense of mission, a feeling that "we are not just born to live and die like beasts," but that we have important tasks to accomplish in this world, is a crucial part not only of the Jewish tradition, but of the Western tradition, i.e., of our tradition, be we Jews, Christians, atheists, or what have you. And he is warning us that however anachronistic and distasteful this Hebraic particularism might appear to the more sophisticated Hellenistic aspect of our culture, we turn our backs on it only at the risk of ridding ourselves of something vital and life-sustaining.

To the Victorian men and women who read Matthew Arnold, such a warning would have been altogether superfluous. They knew in their bones that their nation had been chosen to play a great role in the world, and they were eager to play it. What they needed to be reminded of was that other people, unlucky enough not to have been born British, were not, as Kipling put it, "lesser breeds without the law." Hence, Arnold's stress on Hellenism. Today, however, when the "English disease" seems to have sapped the British nation of much of its vitality and energy—and when this "disease," whatever its exact nature, appears to be spreading to other parts of the democratic world, including the United States—perhaps it is time to stress once again the Hebraic virtues of strictness and struggle, sacrifice and study. Which is exactly what Paul Johnson has done in this admirable and splendid book. □

BEHIND THE FRONT PAGE: A CANDID LOOK AT HOW THE NEWS IS MADE

David S. Broder/Simon and Schuster/\$18.95

Stephen Chapman

David Broder of the *Washington Post* is the dean of American political reporters, but readers who pick up this book out of an interest in politics will be disappointed. Though most of its anecdotes grow out of campaigns, *Behind the Front Page* is an exercise in press criticism, written largely for journalists and other news junkies. It has some definite assets. It is well timed, coming in the wake of the *Miami Herald's* exposure of Gary Hart's relationship with Donna Rice. It is written by a talented reporter who has covered a lot of historic events. It is a sober and resolutely fair-minded examination of how the press does its job. That it is windy, unpersuasive, and obtuse in many places, and ultimately unsatisfying as a whole, doesn't make it any less valuable a glimpse into how the press sees itself.

Behind the Front Page consists of Broder's recollections about assorted news stories, combined with extensive consideration of how he and other reporters did their job in each instance. The author has several purposes in mind. The first is to induce some humility in his colleagues. "If we treated our audience with the respect

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its members deserve, and gave them an accurate understanding of the pressures of time and space under which we work, we could acknowledge the inherent limitations in our work," Broder writes. "Instead of promising All the News That's Fit to Print, I would like to see us say—over and over, until the point has been made—that the newspaper that drops on your doorstep is a partial, hasty, incomplete, inevitably somewhat flawed and inaccurate rendering of some of the things we have heard in the past 24 hours—distorted, despite our best efforts to eliminate gross bias, by the very process of compression that makes it possible for you to lift it from the doorstep and read about it in an hour."

In pointing out mistakes, Broder doesn't spare himself. He dutifully notes that he overlooked or underestimated such important stories as the 1967 "Dump Johnson" movement, the rise of feminism, the politicization of the religious right, and the tax revolt. In Wisconsin's 1976 presidential primary, he was so reckless as to project victories for Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford based on interviews with a grand total of eighty-five voters in a single city. Luckily for Broder both won, though more narrowly than expected. Still, he says, the prediction "was

preposterous, and I deserved to get burned." If that wasn't bad enough, he and the *Post*, eager to report the winners in the earliest possible edition, declared Morris Udall the victor in Wisconsin on the basis of incomplete and misleading election returns, producing a "Dewey defeats Truman" fiasco in 150,000 copies of the newspaper.

But not all the errors he examines are his own. The most revealing is "Billygate," the mini-scandal involving Jimmy Carter's brother and the government of Libya. It is deservedly forgotten now, but Broder notes that for several weeks in the summer of 1980, it was the subject of an average of three stories a day in the now-defunct *Washington Star*. Prodded by its rival, the *Washington Post* devoted 117 stories to the subject in less than three months, forty-six of them on the front page. In the end, it was all smoke and no fire: Billy did nothing warranting prosecution, and the President had no discernible connection to anything his brother did with the Libyans. Why did the press go wild? One of the *Star* reporters on the story said his editor "got pleasure from sticking it to Carter." Broder says, "We were all too eager to have the big story pan out, and we brushed aside anything that did not help move the story along to what we thought should be its conclusion."

There are other factors at work, too. One is the melodramatic bent of most journalists, who have an insatiable taste for stories with plainly marked heroes, villains, and moral lessons. Another factor is the capital press corps' chronic inability to distinguish what is truly important from what is of interest only to people in Washington—an unavoidable occupational hazard, no doubt, but one whose damage could be contained by editors and reporters mindful of the danger. Washington boasts few of those.

Some of his other examples are less illuminating. He leads off the book with one that "nags at me as do few other stories I have ever written"—Edmund Muskie's famous crying-in-the-snow scene on the eve of the 1972 New Hampshire primary. Muskie was angry at a story in William Loeb's *Manchester Union-Leader* claiming, on the basis of a letter purportedly from a Florida man, that Muskie had used a disparaging term for French-Americans. It turned out that the letter was one of the Nixon White House's "dirty tricks." "What the incident shows, for journalistic purposes, is the risk of misleading the reader when the reporter's information is incomplete. . . . Unwittingly, I did my part in the work of the Nixon operatives in helping destroy the



credibility of the Muskie candidacy," Broder says. But it's hard to see what he or anyone else could have done differently. As Broder himself admits, daily reporting is inevitably incomplete, and understanding the full context of any political event is a job that can be handled only by historians. Should the press have held off reporting Muskie's reaction until the accuracy of the *Union Leader's* story could be established? Of course not. But barring unreasonable delays in reporting public events, reporters have no way to guarantee that the events will be interpreted in their proper context. There is no point in agonizing over what can't be changed.

Especially when there are other failings that are not inevitable. Broder goes out of his way to debunk the idea that news coverage is colored by any consistent ideological bias. What conservatives see as a liberal tilt, he insists, is actually just a "skeptical posture." But skeptical of what? Two stories that come to mind suggest that the press is selective about what it doubts. One is the Reagan Administration's 1982 proposal to require federally funded family planning clinics to get parental permission before dispensing contraceptives to minors. In news reports on the resulting controversy, particularly on network newscasts, the proposal was invariably referred to as the "squeal rule"—a loaded term if there ever was one. Despite reading four and sometimes five newspapers and watching a morning news program every day, I didn't see or hear a single report that treated the proposal as one that might have some merit. The *New York Times* ran a long analysis which, though it conceded the "debate has been percolating," quoted no one who favored the proposal, omitting even the Administration's stated reasons. Every reporter apparently assumed that it could only be the worthless work of right-wing cranks and religious fanatics.

Sometimes the problem is not coverage but lack of it. In a 1984 debate among the Democratic presidential candidates, Reubin Askew asked Jesse Jackson if he had reversed his position on abortion. Jackson said he hadn't, and to my knowledge no news organ ever reported that he was lying (except the *Chicago Tribune*, where I did). In fact, on numerous occasions before his presidential race, Jackson had vigorously and publicly denounced abortion on demand—arguing that it would lead to the killing of people on the basis of "blindness, crippledness, old age," endorsing the Hyde Amendment, praising a restrictive ordinance in Akron for "defending human life in its most defenseless state." All this was easy to

document, as I discovered, but no one else in the major news media ever bothered. Yet much more modest shifts in the opposite direction by other politicians—Ronald Reagan and George Bush, for example—have been noted in press accounts. Reporters are highly skeptical of the right-to-life movement, but not of its opponents. The reason, no doubt, is that most of them favor a policy allowing abortion on demand—as documented by S. Robert Lichter, Linda S. Lichter, and Stanley Rothman in *The Media Elite*.

These cases hardly exhaust the list of topics most press organs have ignored or covered in inexcusably slanted ways. The blame lies less with conscious distortions than with a broad worldview—liberal, secular, cynical—that is almost universal among reporters. In most instances, reporters don't deliberately omit evidence that contradicts their own opinions—they simply aren't aware it exists. The lack of diversity in the newsroom produces a stale uniformity in coverage. Broder argues that "the most influential voices in journalism today—as in the past—are staunchly conservative," noting the dominance of the right among opinion columnists. But even if the op-ed tilt were as pronounced as he claims, it's absurd to pretend that one page of explicitly conservative views can match the weight of the covertly liberal ones that permeate the entire news section. Broder declares primly that "impartiality is one of the most important values in a reporter's life," but if he truly doubts that this sort of bias colors news coverage, he should look at the *Post's* local competition. The *Washington Times* has its share of flaws, but it has made itself valuable by frequently covering stories that otherwise wouldn't be covered. Having a staff of editors and reporters who tend to be politically conservative ensures a distinct perspective on the world's events. The *Times* example also dramatizes the crucial point: The enemy of a well-informed citizenry is not slanted news coverage, but uniformly slanted news coverage. What is needed is a diversity of biases.

The strength of Broder's book is that he has no desire to offer the last word on the subject of the news media's failings. He says his ultimate purpose is to encourage ordinary people to read their papers critically and skeptically, and to let reporters and editors know when their work doesn't measure up. For those readers who aspire to do that, *Behind the Front Page* is a good introduction to the daily dilemmas of the people who cover the news. In its own defects, it inadvertently suggests which of the press's failings are the most intractable. □

ARMED TRUCE: THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COLD WAR, 1945-46

Hugh Thomas/Atheneum/\$27.50

Robert H. Ferrell

The indefatigable Hugh Thomas! How other to characterize the author of this blockbuster of a book about the Cold War, a picture of the world in early 1946? It is the eighth book Thomas has published in the past quarter century. He began with the Spanish Civil War, turned to a history of Cuba, thence to a *History of the World* "in order to have an opportunity to broaden his interests" (says the book jacket). Along the way he slipped in books about Suez, John Strachey, the radical challenge in Europe, and Goya. He promises several books on the Cold War, perhaps something like the six volumes that Churchill did on World War II. To prepare for his ordeal he shucked off his university (unnamed) and "accepted an honorary post as chairman for the Centre for Policy Studies, a new think-tank designed to assist in the long-overdue regeneration of Great Britain under Margaret Thatcher." All the while he has been carrying on—according to the blurb, which Thomas surely wrote or approved: he retains his interest in Spain and the Mediterranean, is married to a painter named Vanessa, has three children, and lives in London. The photograph of him shows a workmanlike fellow, dressed casually, sitting in what appears to be a woods, looking earnestly at the camera, and holding (what else?) a book.

The author divides his new book into five "books," each with chapters—the first on Russia, second on the West, then a look at the lands in dispute East and West, followed by the atomic bomb, concluding with the signs of division in 1946, namely, Churchill's Fulton speech about the Iron Curtain and the Soviets' reluctant departure from Azerbaijan in Iran. Thomas writes in enormous paragraphs, moving around ruminatively with several buts or howevers or neverthelesses. He has written in great detail, setting out the movements of diplomatic notes or the exchanges by leaders at conferences. In the chapters, say, on

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Eastern Europe, he goes into detail about Czechoslovakia, or about Hungary, or Rumania, without patience for readers to whom place names and people are not exactly common knowledge. So much the worse for them, he seems to say, as he footslogs through what, he evidently believes, are essential materials. He lays out the details of the Cold War, and if a reader doesn't want to take his hand and follow him through the woods, that's up to the reader.

Let it be said that this is no revisionist nonsense, about how the West held victory in its hands in 1945 and then lost the peace because leaders lacked resolution or were dreaming of the markets of Eastern Europe or failed to appreciate Russian sensibilities and therefore forced the Soviet Union into a war that Walter Lippmann announced was a cold war because it was not openly declared and waged. At this point Thomas's common sense, buttressed by his conservative politics, avoids the errors of the revisionist historians of the late 1960s and early 1970s. He goes into the repressions in Eastern Europe, relates how democrats in those countries occupied by the Red Army were in deep trouble from the outset, and how heroism and cowardice alike had the same reward, poverty at home and complete subjection to the local Communists directed from Moscow, or else a journey on the dreadful trains that went east to Siberia. All the while, so he shows, the presence of Russian troops in Eastern Europe, the troops of the United States and Britain in the West, divided the Continent into what during the past decades has become a permanent arrangement.

Let it be said also that Thomas's timing of his new book on the Cold War is perfect. The revisionists of fifteen or twenty years ago were too soon with their books, as well as too wrongheaded. The basic materials, such as the U.S. State Department archives and the British archives, were only beginning to open, and collections of manuscript material were closed—Dean Acheson's papers at Yale opened only two years ago. Then, also, the revisionists were so mesmerized by America's failure in Vietnam that they wrote it backward into their accounts of the Truman era.

They actually could have examined the excesses of the Nixon period, where there was plenty of room for revision. They looked farther back, to a time when things were quite different. But now, after a long generation and more, the materials on the beginnings of the Cold War are open (at least in the West; the Soviet archives, of course, are closed tight and presumably will continue to be). Some perspective is possible also on Vietnam; no writer today needs to write under the shadow of that disaster.

But this huge book is nonetheless flawed, and the flaws need discussion, not merely because they will forewarn readers but because, perhaps, their setting out may cause this hardworking, able, indeed indefatigable author to rethink what he is doing.

First of all, what we do not need is an enormously detailed history of the Cold War, an accounting such as Thomas is proposing, that will run to several big volumes and virtually exhaust its readers—as, frankly, Churchill did in his books (how many readers of the present review have ever gotten beyond Churchill's first volume?). We do not need to know the massively and often unimportantly documented movements of what is now forty-two years into the past. Yes, the analyzer of this period, of the Cold War, needs himself to know those movements. But he must generalize from them, not recite them.

And—sorry to be so longwinded in relating what Hugh Thomas ought to do—there needs to be excessive caution in getting the factual record straight. The temptation for an industrious author like Thomas is to roll through the mountainous *Nachlass*, the piles of documents and books and articles, and take out what seems important and rifle the rest. Indeed the riffling is absolutely necessary, for otherwise Thomas or any other writer confronting this forbidding terrain, Alps upon Alps, will never get to the top, never finish. But Thomas or anyone seeking to write the history of the Cold War must take notes with care, and not seize upon whatever is easily at hand, or find himself with the temptation to write from memory or make up what ought to fit and in a literary way does fit.

Let me offer an example of what Thomas did with President Harry S. Truman, who is the most important actor in his book about the Cold War. Truman admittedly was a well-ordered, systematic character, and when he enters the pages of history he offers the historian a chance to relax, to breathe a sigh of relief—compared to analyzing the activities of the devious, inferential Franklin D. Roosevelt. What you saw

was what you got. The temptation, however, is to draw Truman simply, to think that this straightforward character does not deserve the care that, say, Roosevelt requires.

This is a historical error. Truman's portrait must be gotten correctly, for otherwise the historian does not know his man. Upon picking up this book I noticed that the jacket blurb retailed its virtues, and one of them caught my eye: "Hugh Thomas's book contains vivid portraits of the main actors on this shaky stage: . . . Truman . . ." I checked the index and turned to p. 117. Thomas here relates that Truman seemed to have no roots. And why does he say that? Because, apparently, they are not such roots as Thomas himself has. The author remarks in the blurb that one of his grandfathers came from Wales, the other from "an old Staffordshire family." Well, Hugh Thomas does not understand American roots, which are important only to members of the DAR. Take my roots. I have never thought much about being rootless, even though I cannot trace my family on either side beyond my great-grandfathers. Indeed one of my roots strikes me as funny—family lore has it that one great-grandfather came out of England in the 1850s, in a hurry, because of "woman trouble." As for Truman's roots, they reached back far enough. He believed that both of his great-grandfathers came from Kentucky but any further provenance never disturbed him.

Beyond the roots problem Thomas gets into other trouble. He says that Truman's parents "moved annually from farm to farm." Actually they did

this only between the years 1884 and 1887. He writes that "they had always owned 'Grandview,' a big house without much land." Where did he get that? Grandview is the name of the Missouri town near which Truman's maternal grandfather owned a big farm of 600 acres. Thomas says Truman farmed before the First World War for nine years. The figure, maybe inconsequential, but then Thomas ought to get it straight, is eleven—from 1906 to 1917. "In the 1920s," Thomas writes, "he had tried to make money as a haberdasher, but he had been too generous to his creditors." That is a plausible conclusion but incorrect. Truman and his partner Eddie Jacobson ran the haberdashery from 1919 to 1922, and they did not extend credit. They were caught in the sudden price deflation of 1921-1922 and lost \$25,000 on a \$35,000 inventory, an enormous loss in those days.

Then, lastly, this interesting and yet (in the instance of Truman) casually inaccurate volume needs, it would seem, more care, more subtlety in judging the very complicated problems in Eastern Europe during the immediate postwar months, the beginning of the Cold War. Consider the case of Rumania, as set out in pp. 281-289. Generally the accounting is correct in a factual sense. But the author does not have a feel for the extraordinarily difficult situation of a little country such as Rumania, caught between East and West. The Rumanians are not really a people capable only of inspiring jokes—no more than the Poles or the

East Frisians. Theirs has been a tragic history, and actually has continued to be tragic down to the present, when the Communist regime is so incompetent that it has reduced the Rumanian economy to the level of Albania.

By the year 1930, Rumania already was in trouble, what with the Great Depression and a political confusion too complicated to relate. King Carol, who never wanted to be king, was called back after a ten-year exile. He tried his best to maintain the country's independence against predators on both sides, but by 1939 had to give in; German power was overwhelming. At the end of the war the country was in dreadful shape, and it was the Russians' turn to take it over. For the task Stalin sent Andrei Vyshinsky, nothing less than a gangster, the unspeakable prosecutor of the purge trials.

At this juncture, however, Thomas fails to understand the situation. He describes the foreign minister, Gheorghe Tatarescu, as an opportunist, when Tatarescu was simply an honest bourgeois who was trying to save something from the wreck; instead, of course, Tatarescu's reward was execution. The rightist Tatarescu failed, and so did the leftist Stefan Voitec, who as minister of education sought to give evidence of cooperating with the Communists by "bolshesizing the schools . . . by purges of teachers, by imposing new Marxist-Leninist textbooks and organising pro-Communist rallies of children." The fact that Voitec had a Communist deputy did not necessarily mean that the minister of education himself was weak; he was trying to cooperate so as to hold a modicum of control. Thomas undertakes to show how a few local Communists cooperated because they were not real Rumanians: Gheorghiu-Dej and Vasile Luca and Ana Pauker. Gheorghiu-Dej and Luca had been born in Transylvania when it was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and Mrs. Pauker was the daughter of a rabbi in Moldavia. Their origins had little to do with their cooperation. They were weaklings, inconsequential people, "yes" men and women who did what Vyshinsky told them. It was said of Mrs. Pauker that when she put up her umbrella in Bucharest it was a sign that it was raining in Moscow.

A postscript in regard to the book. It is a pity that text and notes contain so many typos and misspellings and other lapses, such as describing Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson as "secretary for war." Here the responsibility must be shared by Thomas and his New York publisher, Antheneum, which apparently has no editors. Curiously the book was set in Scranton by Hadden Craftsmen, usually an excellent printer. □



RACING THROUGH PARADISE: A PACIFIC PASSAGE

William F. Buckley, Jr., with photographs
by Christopher Little/Random House/\$25.00

Geoffrey Norman

The publisher is calling *Racing Through Paradise* the "third entry in Bill Buckley's now classic sailing trilogy." Which shows confidence, if not outright wishfulness. There is every chance that this book and the others—*Atlantic High* and *Airborne*—will be judged classics by someone with more authority than the author of flap copy for Random House. After all, Buckley's introduction to celestial navigation, written for the intelligent layman in one of those two previous volumes, has been widely reprinted and hailed as something of a breakthrough by accredited experts. No reason not to expect that the more lyrical passages will stand and give pleasure as long as people still read and sail and enjoy sharing enthusiasms, which is one of Mr. Buckley's distinguishing traits. So . . . yes, these books may indeed become classics and that might not be just another case of flap copy hyperbole.

But what about this *trilogy* business? I read *Racing Through Paradise* without coming across a promise by Buckley that this was his last sailing book. Of course I had read the book in one sitting and had, admittedly, skipped over some of the logistical details of putting together a cruise from Hawaii to New Guinea. Doubtless the arrangements were almost as much of a challenge as the actual sailing, but they do not make for the same compelling reading.

I thought about going back through the book to see if there was such a promise buried in there somewhere, but decided against it. I'd be willing to bet that Buckley hasn't made any such promise . . . not to his publisher, not to his readers, and certainly not to himself.

If I were the publisher, I would merely call this, conservatively, the third volume in the Buckley sailing series and leave it at that.

Now, as to the actual book, it is "about" a voyage that Buckley, his son Christopher, and some companions took across the Pacific Ocean

in a 71-foot ketch called *Sealestial*. Since this is a Buckley expedition, things are done—and recounted—in a way that is guaranteed to irritate the Puritans among us. Remember the limo in *Overdrive*? In this book, the same red flag is waved when Buckley describes the loading of wines.

And of course, wines. Danny calculated that fifty cases of beer was about right, and I got the wine through a merchant in Honolulu: 3 cases of Vintage Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, 3 cases of '82 Kendall Jackson Cabernet Sauvignon, 3 cases of '82 St. Bonnet, Medoc, 3 cases of '83 Fleurie, Barolet, 4 cases of '82 Chablis, Barolet, 1 case of '81 Ch. Gloria, 5 cases of '83 Muscadet Sèvre-et-Maine, 3 cases of '78 Jean Léon Cabernet Sauvignon, 3 cases of '83 Piesporter Michelsberg Kabinett, Reh, 3 cases of Mateus Rosé, 1 case of Freixinet Cordon Negro Brut champagne. The cost was \$2,525.74. Liz [the cook] served approximately one thousand man-meals, so that comes down to \$2.50 booze per person per meal; okay as a rough estimate, but there were seven or eight cases left over, which we ended up giving to a church at Kavieng. I note that Captain Cook, on his bark *Endeavour*, provided for seventy men at sea for one year, "Beer in Pundheons, 1200 gallons, Spirits 1600 gallons." I haven't the energy to decipher which of the two vessels, *Endeavour*, or *Sealestial*, was the more vinous.

This sort of thing violates a loose convention in adventure books. The adventurer is supposed to suffer and

we, the readers, are supposed to admire him for his fortitude. Never mind that the adventurer is out there doing whatever it is he is doing by choice. It is a self-inflicted ordeal and one that—the reader surely thinks—is better than a day at the office . . . otherwise why would he bother reading about it?

Buckley is too well mannered to bitch about life at sea when he has not been pressed into service and too confident to be pushed around by some half-baked convention holding that before one can enjoy sailing, one must suffer. (On that point, Buckley includes a rumination on solitary sea crossers and finds them, with one exception, misanthropic and unappealing. Having read a number of their books for pay, I say he is right on.)

So if the point is to enjoy (Buckley goes sailing for fun and elsewhere for transcendence) then what, besides wine, is required? Well, companionship for one. Tools, for another. And work, to round things out.

The companions, it turns out, are all working on book manuscripts as well as keeping journals of this voyage. Buckley quotes from the journals, all of which were turned in to him at the end of the trip. Many of the entries—especially those of his son, Christopher—are hilarious.

Soon it was four o'clock, and our watch looked like it would pass without incident. It was at this point that Himself appeared at the companionway, in boxer shorts, to say he was having a hard time sleeping, not being able to find the leeboards. He said that maybe this would be the time to jibe. "I don't want to have to wake Allan [the skipper] to find the leeboards."

Five minutes later we had managed to wrap the genoa so tightly around the forestay I thought we'd need KY jelly to get it back down. We had also managed to wrap the windward sheet one and one-half times around the propeller.

Well, needless to say, it was necessary to awaken Allan. In fact he woke all on his

own, the sounds on the deck now clearly panic-tonal. He and I brought in the genoa, pondered the propeller-bound sheet, and persuaded WFB that it would be best to wait until light to raise the second jenny. WFB was surprisingly docile to our argument, needing no pressing, perhaps out of a sense of complicity for our present state. What's wrong with our new tack—if it could be called that—was that if sleep was difficult before, it was surely impossible now, what with the 12-foot following swells and Dick at the helm.

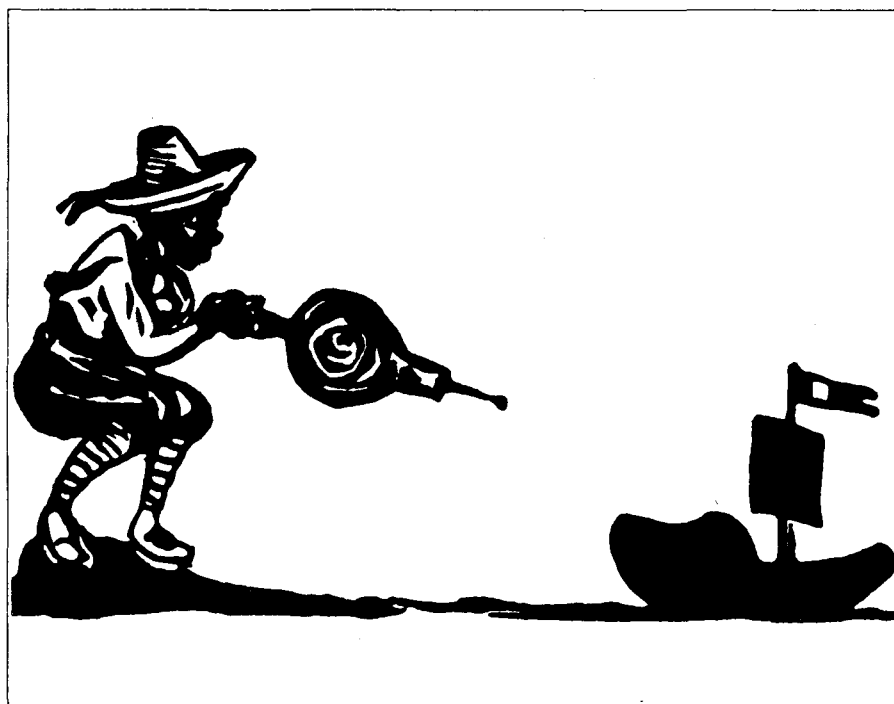
Christopher Buckley is the entertainment officer of this cruise and among the movies he brings along is *The Wackiest Ship in the Army*. This crew does not take itself too seriously.

In the way of tools, there is a new navigational device which Buckley describes lovingly, as well as a computer program he calls WhatStar, which he worked out with the help of Hugh Kenner. Buckley on navigation is like reading McPhee on geology—you go much further than you ever thought you would care to, carried by the palpable enthusiasm and the charitably clear prose of your guide. Buckley even tells the reader where he may actually skip over a few pages in the event he isn't all that interested in navigation. I found those pages clear and rewarding.

As for work . . . there is much writing going on aboard *Sealestial*. Four major works in progress or final editing. Some reviewers have expressed reservations about this. Presumably it is also an offense against the convention of sailing adventures. You do not drink and you do not write and you do not horse around. What you do, by God, is *sail* and when it is done, you will be a better man for it.

Maybe . . . but I would rather by a damn sight spend a month aboard a boat full of busy writers, skippered by William F. Buckley, than a boat full of puritanical sailors under the command of Dennis Conner. And I wouldn't even consider reading a book by Dennis Conner except for pay . . . which I recently did, and earned every penny. On the other hand, I will eagerly buy and read every book in the Buckley sailing series. He is large enough of spirit to know that the wine and the companionship and the tools raise the level of the thing once you have mastered those necessary fundamentals of seamanship without which you wouldn't be able to enjoy *any* of it.

So one hopes he will sail on, bringing back these very human and engaging volumes from each voyage. As long as you can't be there yourself, enjoying a glass of wine and a sunset at sea, reading his account of it has got to be the next best thing. □



Geoffrey Norman is a contributing editor of Esquire.

**DON'T BLAME THE INDIANS:
NATIVE AMERICANS AND THE MECHANIZED
DESTRUCTION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

Ted Williams/GSJ Press (So. Hamilton, MA)/\$12.95

Reid Buckley

Author Ted Williams is a gifted writer (*Audubon*, *Gray's Sporting Journal*, *Smithsonian*) with a passionate commitment to the American outdoors and almost every creature in our wild native American heritage. The blistering point he makes in *Don't Blame the Indians* is that we are treating American Indians (a) as though they too were wildlife, to be unnaturally congealed in a kind of cultural amber, and (b) in privileged fashion, like those notorious scofflaws of the U.N., granted a kind of diplomatic immunity under which they thumb their noses at the rest of us while running their four-wheelers over every norm of game management and conservation.

It's so depressing, and so stupid. Once neglected and even abused wards of the state, Indians now are being indulged in the worst avarices and in their most retrograde (human) instincts. Obsequiously code-named "Native Americans," which title they may lay claim to no more than anyone else of us who is native born, they are licensed to fish and hunt whatever they please, whenever they please, however they please, and in the quantities they please.

The dismal result is that if walruses and polar bears are slaughtered with promiscuous disregard for their survival; if such rare avian species as the cackler goose are extirpated from breeding grounds and also jeopardized; and if valuable game fish like the steelhead salmon are totally eliminated from spawning waters in the Skagit River, or if the fabled king salmon, the chinook, is reduced along the entire Klamath and Trinity river system below that critical breeding population that signifies certain extinction—we may *not* blame our Indians and Eskimos, Mr. Williams is scrupulous to emphasize, but rather lay these insensate tragedies on the altar of All-American Guilt.

Recall that obese ass, Marlon Brando? He left his brains at Wounded Knee. Guilt and sentimentality have contrived with the Indian Citizen Act of 1924, the Native Claims Settlement

Act of 1971, and other such special-interest legislation to make "super citizens" of the red man. On the rationale that barbarian ways are vital to Indian culture and still critical to Indian subsistence, the most elemental ordinances protecting wildlife are in his case put aside.

At terrible cost. The bowhead whale is on the brink of extinction. No matter. Our Eskimos are exempted from the relevant treaties under the ironically named Marine Mammal Protection Act. That in fact bowhead whales never were critical to the existence of the igloo set (excavations on hunting grounds in use by Eskimos 700 years have unearthed the remains of just thirty or forty whales, no more) is irrelevant to the Indian lobby. Suffice that Innuits plain like killing the great mammals. And as for the "culture supposedly being preserved by today's Eskimo . . . hunters," writes Mr. Williams witheringly, it is "as dead as the great auk. There is as much hope of and purpose to preserving it as preserving feudalism among the English or Bantu Zuluism among American blacks. When the whales show up, today's Eskimo hunters put on their Eddie Bauer down jackets, step out of their oil-heated, color-TV-equipped homes and converge on migration routes by airplane, snowmobile and ATV."

It's disgusting. Mr. Williams recounts Indian and Eskimo orgies of slaughter in grisly detail, culling from firsthand accounts by professionals like John Matthews, a biologist with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, thus:

Asked about what he has observed on the ocean during his walrus research, he doesn't equivocate. Regarding "subsistence" use of sea birds and walruses, he says this: "As birds come on the island, there's hundreds of thousands of auklets and murre . . . and it's just like a release [for the "Natives"]. The first couple of times they get into walruses, for instance, they just shoot and shoot and shoot until they're out of ammo or the walruses are all gone. Sometimes they shoot and the birds drop and they just keep going. No attempt to retrieve . . ."

Indians gillnet fishes in season and out, illicitly retailing their dispensation, tribal councils winking broadly while they endow blond, blue-eyed fishermen with fictitious "Native American" blood. They shoot golden and bald eagles along major flyways for the feathers, in order to fashion ceremonial headdresses, which they peddle to eager tourists. Using fast launches and cannons with bomb-tipped harpoons (so much for tradition) they indiscriminately let fly at the whales, destroying as many as three for every one captured, and sometimes abandoning that on the floes. A blood lust that would be deemed horrid, even sinful, in anyone else is excused, because the popular myth of the noble savage has it that he killed only what he needed, using every last bit of meat, gristle, bone, and hide.

The bunkum exposed by Mr. Williams emanates from the same compost of sentimental mush as those egregious claims for the wolf that it

kills only what it consumes, or that—the silliness begs belief—the North American wolf, miraculously unlike its first cousins in Russia and central Europe, excludes mankind from its prey. The Indian, like any predator, has always been an opportunistic killer. "To put it bluntly," declares historian Calvin Martin of Rutgers, "the Indian was everywhere, except in the Rocky Mountain trade, the principal agent in the overhunting of furbearers." Evidence builds that mammoth and mastodon were anciently exterminated by the ancestors of that same hawk-nosed creep who weeps glycerine tears at the sight of litter on our roadsides, having apparently never visited an Indian reservation in Oklahoma or North Carolina. Indians littered the Great Plains with unused, unwanted cadavers of their kills. "The record seems emphatic on this issue," writes Martin. "The post-contact Indian wasted game with gusto."

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Reid Buckley is a novelist and founder of the Buckley School of Public Speaking.

Chief Factor at Fort Prince of Wales, "they were so accustomed to kill everything that came within their reach, that few of them could pass by a small bird's nest, without slaying the young ones, or destroying the eggs."

Mr. Williams sums up this indictment by setting forth a series of trenchant commonsense behavioral observations that will winch howls of outrage out of our sentimentalists. Indians will never grow up unless they are made responsible, which means that special treatment of them must cease. Their nomad hunter culture is an anachronism that may not be tolerated, and which they must be educated into abandoning once and forever. There is no longer a sufficient pool of game to survive the wasteful taking, and Indians no longer fish and hunt in the primitive manner that limited their depredations. Undisciplined by law, they will net and kill until there is nothing left.

Natural predators are opportunistic, taking whatever they can get whenever they can get it. They do not stop "when they have enough" because next time and the time after that they may get nothing. They alternate between feast and famine. If they can procure sufficient tongues, they will eat tongues only. . . . Conservation of anything other than themselves is irrelevant to natural predators because there are never enough of them to make a difference. . . . The old freshman-biology aphorism that predators control their prey . . . is largely false. For the most part, it's the other way around.

This is not merely a matter of wastefulness. Anybody with the slightest firsthand experience of the natural world knows that blood lust in predators, animal or human, is a fact—that is, anybody whose grasp of the realities has not been devastated by Walt Disney, Marty Stouffer, and that perfectly awful TV series, "Grizzly Adams." My two comparatively civilized pointers, having received a double ration of two heaping bowls each of kibble, nevertheless trapped, slaughtered, and devoured all seven of our three-quarter grown game chickens—some fifteen or sixteen pounds of them! They weren't hungry. They were so sick they could scarcely walk two days, their bellies swollen to the bursting. One of these same sweet, affectionate bitches flew into another killing frenzy two weeks ago, destroying eighteen half-grown mallard ducks in less than five minutes, oblivious to the shouts of my son.

White men massacred Indians with merciless ferocity; Indian war parties butchered and mutilated their victims, white or red. It is this savage heritage—with respect to wild game, wild game the victims—that our pater-

nalistic laws, certain idiot judges, and grandstanding celebrities seek to perpetuate. Curious, isn't it, that the same folk who plaster their bumpers with

"Save the Whales" stickers probably support such as Russell Means and his American Indian Movement. Thus ideological perversity. □

THE RENEWAL OF LITERATURE: EMERSONIAN REFLECTIONS

Richard Poirier/Random House/\$19.95

Jennifer Howard

Twentieth-century critics and readers have largely consigned Ralph Waldo Emerson to a literary vacuum. Bring up the name and you'll evoke no more than vaguely unpleasant memories of sitting in a college library in an overstuffed armchair, reading overstuffed prose for an American Studies course, or maybe a rosy-cheeked quotation along the lines of "Hitch your wagon to a star."

Only a century ago, Emerson held a preeminent place in American letters as the essayist, poet, and philosopher who shaped and gave voice to New World transcendentalism; he inspired (sometimes negatively, as with Hawthorne) a generation of still-read writers. But Emerson's poetry has been overshadowed by Whitman's, his prose by Thoreau's—two disciples who managed to elude their mentor's fate by seeming somehow "relevant" to this century. The man himself we now remember as a genial, naive, and *passé* gent, whose Pollyanna optimism, appropriate to antebellum America, has no place in an age of numerous crises of confidence.

But lately there have been signs of a movement afoot among American literati to bring Emerson back from the

Jennifer Howard is a writer and editor living in Washington, D.C.

void. Last year, Irving Howe put together a book of essays called *The American Newness: Culture and Politics in the Age of Emerson*, drawn from lectures delivered at Harvard. In it, Howe recalled Emerson as having been something of a revolutionary in his own time; "what Washington and Jefferson had enabled institutionally," Howe wrote, "Emerson would now bring into fruition in the sphere of the spirit, and therefore in the life of the culture." Howe then hypothesized that writers today still look for a fresh start as Emerson imagined it, a throwing off of cultural and institutional shackles.

As an apologist, Howe at least had the good grace to locate Emerson on the historical landscape: that peculiar and short-lived "newness" of nineteenth-century America that shaped him. Not so Richard Poirier in *The Renewal of Literature*. In this stubbornly ahistorical collection of essays, Poirier, the Harold Bloom of Rutgers, tries to install the much-maligned transcendentalist guru in the pantheon of Writers for All Time. And more than this, Poirier aims to use him as the fountainhead from which will flow a new approach to reading, writing, and criticism. To do this, Poirier has to dislodge a number of notions beaten into us by humanistic pundits and the modernist heirs of T. S. Eliot.

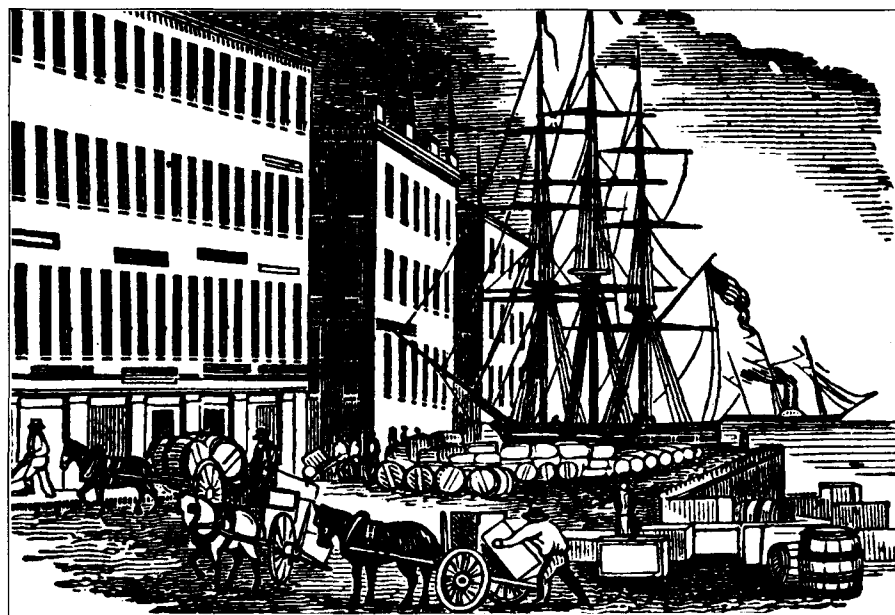
He begins by advancing against the conceit (held by such notables as Secretary of Education William Bennett) that "the writing and reading of literature have a culturally redemptive power." In *To Reclaim a Legacy*, a 1984 report on the humanities, Bennett took literature to be the cultural equivalent of a multivitamin, each "good book" an RDA of the best of Western civilization. He wasn't alone in making the point. Writers, egotists that they are, are happy to make believe that they are indulging in something with "historical inevitability and large consequence."

But Bennett's panacea smells like snake oil to Poirier. Reading may be worthwhile, he writes, but even *Hamlet* can't be the salvation of us all. Why? Because literature, however classic and enduring, doesn't have answers to the questions that the Bennetts of today ask. They imagine it to be a storehouse of the values and ideals lost as the study of the humanities has disintegrated. But literature itself constantly seeks what Poirier terms a dim and unreachable "state of naturalness, authenticity, and simplicity."

Paradoxically, American writers in the nineteenth century evoked pity because they did find themselves in a "condition of bareness," with no cultural tradition of their own behind them. But for Emersonians, this "bareness"—Howe's "American newness"—meant a happy freedom from the weight of tradition that crushes originality. Hence their often-caricatured optimism.

Here Poirier-as-apologist wags a finger at our stereotype of Emerson; he points out that transcendental optimism disguises a still-applicable "special Emersonian form of skepticism." A re-reading of Emerson seems to support Poirier's view. In "Nature," the familiar, absurdly cherubic Emerson writes: "Give me health and a day and I will make the pomp of emperors ridiculous." But later in the same essay, the sage of Concord despairs that "we are like Nebuchadnezzar, dethroned, bereft of reason, and eating grass like an ox."

Poirier argues that this little-known manic-depressiveness applies to Emerson's thoughts on writing as well. Relying on words, Emerson keenly felt the prison of language. Freed as an American from antique habits, he nonetheless had to acknowledge what Poirier calls "the ineluctable condition of all literature: that someone has been there before you and will also be here after you, and that you cannot escape the evidence of this in the language you use." Or, as William James put it rather more succinctly, that "language works against our perception of truth."



To escape this, Emerson insisted on "troping"—twisting words like strands in a rope, to avoid being caught in rigid, inherited meanings. Acting *against* language from within, it releases us from the stranglehold words otherwise have. Writers of genius—Shakespeare, Milton, and, Poirier would add, Emerson—"create densities" with language, giving it movement, avoiding stasis. This is Poirier's explanation for the zig-zag style of Emerson's essays, their maddening quirkiness; what I always took for transcendental disorganization is to Poirier "a productive multiplication, a thickening of possibilities." Emerson believed that the only logic and structure behind writing ought to be a "perpetual inchoation"—always beginning but never feeling obliged to finish a point.

This, says Poirier, explains Emerson's vertiginous habit of moving "out of any rhetorical position he has just occupied into another one, as if in hot pursuit of a truth elusive of more orderly verbal and syntactic inquiry." Poirier likes the technique so well that his flattery tends toward feckless imitation, as in the following sentences: "Literature is a very restricted passage into life, if it is one at all. It is never even all at once everything that is sometimes literature."

To readers of thick and "difficult" twentieth-century texts such as *Ulysses*, this sounds suspiciously like modernism—but it is modernism with a difference. T. S. Eliot's seminal essay "The Metaphysical Poets," in which he declared that the modern poet "must be *difficult*," incited modernist claims that worthwhile literature must evade the reader, via complicated structures and so many allusions that one would have to be a walking library in order to catch them all. Thanks to Eliot, this sort of "difficult" modernism—an elite uneasiness about the tensions and anxieties inherent in Western culture—has, as Poirier laments, served as "the bedrock of literary criticism and of the study of literature from about 1930 onward."

An Emersonian can look at a *Ulysses* and enjoy the difficulty, taking the text as "a sort of battleground" in which words war against the literary technology that cannot control them (just as technology cannot control modern life, even though it puts a stamp on it). Modernists, then, are to Poirier "Emersonians with a vengeance"—only slightly off base. They fail to realize that their favorite bugbear—modern life—threatens real creativity less than using language always has; as Emerson once wrote, "by necessity, by proclivity, by delight, we all quote." Even Shakespeare did it.

So language challenges the writer to be original as much as textual difficulty confounds the reader. Eliot beware.

This launches Poirier into a case-study discussion of literature's squeamishness about modern life as defined by technology. Always the domain of an elite, literature now gets the shivers when it beholds Henry James's "monstrous masses," never very keen on bookish pursuits, magnified and (seemingly) glorified by mass media. But literature itself is no more than a "technology" created by humanity, as much a constraint on originality and freedom as the TV screen, whatever William Bennett might think. After Shakespeare, after Milton, after the greats of your choice, trying to produce original works seems hubris and, worse, a waste of time, if one takes the Emersonian argument to its extreme.

If Emerson was correct, then writing as a creative act is paradoxical. Not that this tired argument has ever stopped writers—including Emerson—from writing. In "Plato," Emerson wrote that "every book is a quotation." *The Renewal of Literature* certainly qualifies; Poirier, well read but lazy enough to let others prove his points for him, has created it out of a pastiche of snippets cut from writers as disparate as Spenser and Stevens. But perhaps they are best allowed to speak for themselves.

Here things get sticky. With all the borrowings and copying that writers must do, how can writing really reflect a self? In an Emersonian philosophy, it cannot. Poirier writes that "no writer of genius, least of all Emerson himself, can ever wholly stifle the human complaint that he must disappear into the very things he has helped create, and all the more inevitably because he copied, borrowed, or stole most of them." This kind of thinking "quite naturally induces the supposition that the very idea . . . of the self ought to be done away with altogether."

Poirier's aptly titled final essay, "Writing Off the Self," discusses a sort of Emersonian/Poirian utopia: a world in which the authorial presence dissolves, leading to an unimaginable but presumably better hereafter. Better, in Poirier's view, because "we are not required to think of loss or reduction or self-dissolution as if it were synonymous with deprivation." Why, he asks, "may it not be exhilarating?" What he fails to point out is that if the self feels exhilaration (or anything else), then you haven't really gotten rid of it at all. And yet Poirier suggests that such an approach should guide writers, readers, and critics, in place of Eliot's dictums.

Poirier seems to think that a Pyrrhic struggle of this sort is the noblest thing mankind can attempt. But like King Canute telling the waves to turn back, the attempt goes nowhere; considering that what sets humanity apart is our ability to write and communicate, it would be near impossible to let go of that which defines us. And if we ever

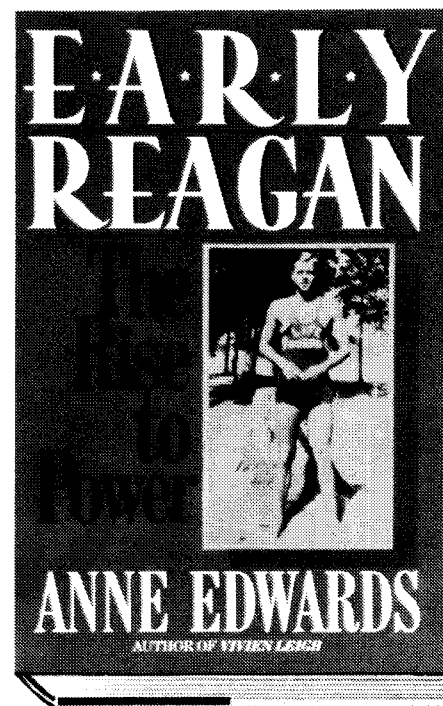
succeeded, critics would find themselves on the street. As an archaeology of Emerson—the uncovering of a skeptical and language-wary (if not especially lucid) writer with unexpectedly modern sympathies—*The Renewal of Literature* succeeds; as a proposed alternative to the critical establishment, however worthy the aim, it does not. □

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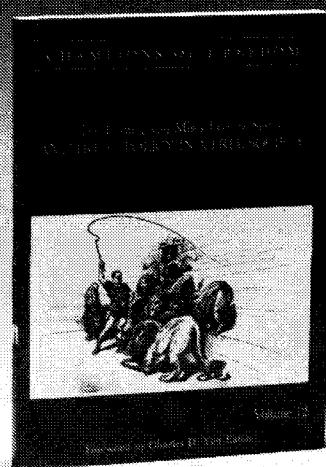
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MOTHER ANGELICA'S ANSWERS, NOT PROMISES

Mother M. Angelica with Christine Allison/Harper & Row/\$13.95

Terry Teachout

This is a tough time to be spreading the Word of God on television. But if you're in the racket, it helps to be a cloistered nun. Take Mother Angelica, founder of Our Lady of the Angels Monastery and of the Eternal Word Television Network. Having sworn a vow of poverty, Mother Angelica is one electronic preacher who isn't

Terry Teachout is a member of the editorial board of the New York Daily News.

likely to be skimming off the odd million here and there, much less groping her godly colleagues in steam-baths. Her sincerity has even stood up to a "60 Minutes" profile.

Before making her debut on "Mother Angelica Live," Mother Angelica was already publishing her homilies in the form of spiritual booklets, more than 15 million of which are currently in circulation. So it was a foregone conclusion that she would get around to writing a full-length book. *Mother*

Angelica's Answers, Not Promises, as it turns out, is several notches above the typical. There are no coy suggestions about the right amount of eyeshadow to use if you want to keep your man satisfied, no simian jabber about the evils of *Ulysses* and *Lolita* and any book that has the word "goddamn" in it. (Well, next to none. Mother Angelica does offer a short but hair-raising riff on how Clark Gable's lonely "damn" in *Gone With the Wind* led directly to everything bad about movies and radio and television today.)

Most of the fare in this book, in fact, is solid Catholic boilerplate. One need only glance at Mother Angelica's remarks about homosexuality ("No matter how deep-seated your homosexuality may be, it is not a license to engage in homosexual activity") to realize that she isn't trimming her cloth to fit the wimple of contemporary theological flabbiness. There are even some admirably blunt, if slightly dated, remarks on pop Protestantism:

than the naiveté of a cloistered nun. When she says that "I was in our dark-room developing some negatives for a layout when the Lord decided to clarify the nature of salvation for me," the appropriate response is not to gnash one's teeth in an anticlerical frenzy but to smile. But when she ends a chapter with "Hang in there. God loves you!" it is impossible for anyone stuffed to bursting with the palsy faith of the present moment to do anything but swoon with nausea. And *Mother Angelica's Answers, Not Promises* hits every cliché of the genre, from the gutsy nuns-can-be-funny-too comeback ("Lady," I said, "I do have faith. It's just that my stomach doesn't know it") to the equalizing cant of the guitar-strumming ninny ("Just because we live in suburbia or drink diet colas or worry about the Joneses doesn't mean we can't be saints").

The last word on this style of apologetic was probably spoken by Edwin O'Connor, who offered in his novel *The Edge of Sadness* the following Bishop Sheen-inspired monologue apropos an imaginary TV personality called The Whistling Priest:

All roads lead to Rome. So they do, or so I hope, but I have my doubts about the highway of The Whistling Priest: that is, I wouldn't think it led much of anywhere. I've always disliked and mistrusted this carnival shill approach to the Church. . . . Obviously when you talk about such things as God, religion, the church, man's soul, to a great many different people, you must necessarily do so in a great many different ways and on a great many different levels. But none of those levels can be—or at least none of them should be—in any sense flashy or false or vulgar, because if they are—no matter what the apparent justification—you run the very serious risk of making God, religion, the church, and man's soul seem a little bit of the same.

That whiff of Sheen is suggestive. While reading *Mother Angelica's Answers, Not Promises*, I came across one of the very few occasions on which Mother Angelica troubles to quote somebody: "Bishop Sheen once said that the truth is the truth whether everyone believes it or no one believes it." Typical, of course, that Mother Angelica should have cited her great-grandfather of the television screen. Even more typical that someone, whether quoter or quotee, got it wrong. For if that remark has a familiar odor, it's because somebody else said it—better. "Right is right, even if nobody does it. Wrong is wrong, even if everybody is wrong about it." G. K. Chesterton, *All Things Considered*.

The point of which is that there are other roads left to the Christian apologist besides the asphalt trail of prosy vulgarity. "One hopes to worship God with a little art if one has any," Igor Stravinsky once said. Apologists like

Spiritual pride is as old as the hills, but there is also a modern-day pride, a pride that manifests itself under the giant umbrella of "positive thinking," and we should confront it. . . . When you subscribe to "positive thinking" you put all of your chips on how you *want* to feel today. . . . Beans are beans, my friend, and they don't taste like chicken. I believe it's far better to simply accept the fact that you're eating beans, and thank God for what you've got.

But books like *Mother Angelica's Answers, Not Promises* are not meant to be reviewed. I only read this one because kind friends at *The American Spectator* thought I might find it interesting as a cultural artifact. And they were right. In fact, interesting isn't the word. This book is an absolutely fascinating document of the way some people live now—and of the kind of religious advice they're getting from folks like Mother Angelica.

Not that the advice is necessarily bad. But having been raised a Southern Baptist, I heard in my adolescence enough of the straight-from-the-shoulder religious vulgarity with which this book is infested to last an eternal lifetime. It begins with the dust jacket, which quotes *People* as having called Mother Angelica "a combination of Ted Turner and Mother Theresa [sic]." This poses an interesting category problem. Who was tackier? The guy at *People* who wrote that sentence or the gal at Harper & Row who thought it appropriate to slap on the jacket of *Mother Angelica's Answers, Not Promises*? Beats me, but the quote, either way, is suitable to the book.

Some of Mother Angelica's offensiveness is, of course, nothing more

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AS

Chesterton, Malcolm Muggeridge, Ronald Knox, C. S. Lewis, or Frank Sheed had it in abundance, and it didn't desert them just because they were talking to the widest possible audience. Don't get me wrong. I hope that thousands of lost souls find themselves in the pages of this book. Mother Angelica is neither flashy nor false, and her sincerity is manifest. (If it weren't, this book would be even more unnerving.) I only mean to suggest that every age gets the preaching it deserves, that our own shabby debased age probably rates preachers like Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart and Robert Schuller. And, on its better days, Mother Angelica. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(continued from page 7)

new allies must hold beliefs that are not totally repugnant to our own populace, but I doubt that their ideals, in the end, will or can include democracy as we know it.

Criticisms aside, I would certainly congratulate Mr. Ledeen on an important and thought-provoking contribution to the foreign policy debate.

—Schuyler G. Steele
Portland, Maine

Michael Ledeen replies:

To start with Mr. Anthony Harrigan's concerns: he admirably documents my claim that American education poorly prepares us for dealing with the world at large. Here we have the president of an "Educational Foundation" lecturing us on the one hand that "Ours is a profoundly conservative society" that does not wish to export the democratic revolution, and, on the other hand, that "[conservatives] are dedicated to the rule of law under a system of republican government." It is precisely that dedication to the rule of law under republican government that makes us a revolutionary society, for these principles are truly revolutionary for most of the rest of the world. Indeed, the very existence of American society is a threat to our most determined enemies, who realize that so long as we flourish, they are challenged.

When he writes that "democratic revolution" is my private vision, not a cause embraced by the American people, one can only wonder in what world he is living, and what people he lives among. Every serious poll of American attitudes finds profound support for peoples striving for greater freedom and democracy, and American reactions to foreign crises in which we are involved invariably revolve around a judgment of the "democratic qualifications" of the people we support. If Mr. Anthony Harrigan wants further

evidence, I commend him to the dust-pile of history, where he can interview Messrs. Reza Pahlavi, Babydoc, Marcos, Somoza, and others of their ilk, who found themselves abandoned by the United States because the American people would no longer tolerate an alliance with a dictator, and demanded instead that the United States government support the democratic revolution (or something perceived or hoped to be that, or something closer to that) in their countries. Finally, on this very important point, Mr. Anthony Harrigan writes that there has been no vote on the issue of democratic revolution. If he means no *referendum*, he is technically correct. But I wouldn't recommend that any member of Congress—much less any presidential candidate—run for election on a program of isolationism or cold-blooded geopolitics. There have certainly been moments of American isolationism, but by now we know that such spasms have produced our greatest catastrophes.

All of the above goes for the pseudonymous rantings of the so-called D. F. L'Hommedieu (it's good to see there are still Nietzscheans in Kearny, N.J., however). D. F. L'Hommedieu not only partakes of the same misunderstandings as Mr. Anthony Harrigan, he caricatures my arguments and then lambastes the caricatures. I share with him a horror of the sort of abstract moralism that Carter gave us, agree that one must often choose the least of available evils (and said so, in those very words), agree that the congressional liberals have used abstract moralism as an excuse for inaction, and deplore a policy consisting of good words and ineffectual acts. But his denial of the fundamental American belief in the universality of the democratic revolution is simply wrong; has he never read the Declaration of Independence? (Or does he believe that words like "man is endowed by his creator with certain unalienable rights" refer only to people in New Jersey?)

With regard to terrorism, Mr. Anthony Harrigan thinks that conservatives favor the use of the armed forces to strike at terrorists, and that *therefore* it is out of order for us to consider the assassination of terrorists. This is a non sequitur. It is not a matter of who should attack the terrorists; the issue is whether the current anti-assassination Executive Order serves our interests or, as I believe, compels us to choose between verbal protest and bombing terrorist targets (headquarters? training camps?) where civilian casualties are inevitably maximized. He has fallen prey to one of the most facile and misleading of the current slogans: to attack the terrorists, we are told, is to lower ourselves to their level. Wrong.

Removing terrorists from the world is a noble calling and is not to be compared with the slaughter of innocent civilians in airports or taking Mediterranean cruises. All those who agree with Harrigan should spend an hour or two with the family of Leon Klinghoffer, the man murdered by Abu Abbas's Palestine Liberation Front on the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro*, or the family of Robert Stethem, murdered on a TWA aircraft in the hands of terrorists en route to Beirut.

As for Mr. Anthony Harrigan's concern that self-appointed experts like me are in danger of taking over U.S. foreign policy, he need not worry. The politicians, lawyers, judges, bureaucrats, and journalists are firmly in control. And that brings us to Mr. Schuyler G. Steele. My complaint about the lawyers is not that they remind the policy makers about legal constraints; that is a worthy task. The problems stem from other causes: first, that the lawyers are forever trying to apply American legal standards to international problems, where the proper standards are determined by a variety of traditions, and not just our own legal code; second, that the lawyers, in their effort to acquire greater power (or, if you're sympathetic to them, in an attempt to hold our officials to higher standards), are imposing a legalistic praxis on government which produces greater paralysis rather than good behavior; and finally that the lawyers and judges are quite clearly attempting to make policy—even foreign policy—and rarely have the qualifications to do so. When Mr. Steele bemoans the weak sisters and congressional imbeciles, he is certainly right; but he must not forget that they are hiding behind the legal mantle of the judges and barristers, who, whatever their individual courage and brain power, are generally devoid of the proper *policy* qualifications and experience.

That things are at a serious turn is demonstrated by recent events. When we are lucky enough to lure a lawyer experienced in international problems to the State Department and he brings *real* wisdom and understanding to bear on foreign policy, the "establishment" flies into a rage, as has befallen Judge Sofaer, the legal counsel to Secretary of State Shultz. He was denounced by the *New York Times* because he dared to write a clear-eyed analysis of the ABM treaty, and has been one of the Administration's toughest thinkers on the subject of international terrorism.

Mr. Steele compares Reagan with Eisenhower, which I believe to be wrong on several counts. First, Eisenhower knew a good deal about the world, which Reagan didn't. Unfortunately, Reagan did not "shield himself behind a mask of bland amiability"; he is in fact an amiable man, and not par-

ticularly engaged on the subject of foreign policy. He is quite passionate about domestic questions, and has basically sound instincts about the world, but lacks the fund of understanding that normally underlies vigorous policy design and conduct. Nowhere is this more evident than on Central America. If the President had been the "shrewd and capable geo-political player" that Mr. Steele believes him to be, then Reagan would have moved in the first year or two of his presidency to deal with the Central American crisis, rather than ordering Secretary of State Haig to stop alarming people with all that belligerent talk about "going to the source," etc. Instead, the problem was set on the back burner, and has boiled over in the second term.

This President is certainly an improvement over the last two. Unfortunately, it's not good enough. And I doubt that the situation can be dramatically improved by *any* President, no matter how brilliant. Ours is a national problem, caused by a series of shortcomings in our national culture and our institutions. There is no quick political fix for such matters, any more than one can quickly remedy our lack of expertise in foreign languages or geography. Like many of the other problems we face, this one can only be overcome over time, if we somehow educate a new generation of Americans with real knowledge about the world, and who enforce reasonable standards of accountability. Meanwhile, it's going to be tough. □

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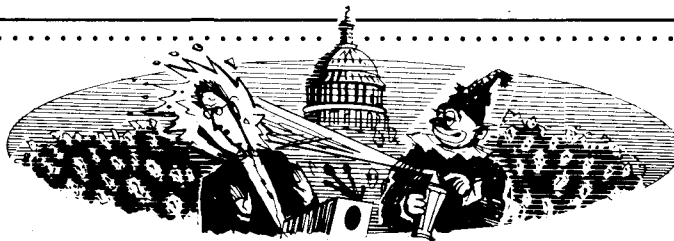
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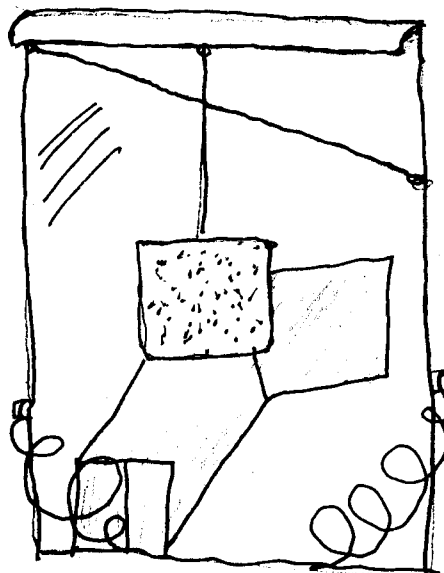
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NEW TALENT

Last month, while gallery-hopping through the Dupont Circle New Talent Exhibition, I noticed that most dealers distributed a paragraph or two about the works on display. With modern art, this is probably wise, perhaps even necessary. A written explanation keeps potential patrons from fumbling around in a private darkness of aesthetic confusion, which might inhibit the search for meaning and check-books. At the Baumgartner Gallery, for example, one such statement explained that the featured artist Lucy Maki "creates spiritual paintings, but not in the sense that the work approaches antimaterialism. To the contrary, they are physical pieces which force the viewer to confront sometimes conflicting attractions and spiritual allusions."



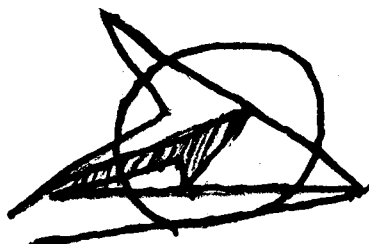
[Figure I, \$1,200]

Fortified with this information I confronted Lucy's *Argonaut* (oil-and-mixed-media-on-canvas), and began translating it into my own medium, or *métier* (Faber-Castell-uniball-pen-on-reporter's-notebook) [Figure I, \$1,200]. Rendering the spiritual telephone cords and rolled tin—Lucy's mixed media—presented certain problems of interpretation, and I was slightly self-conscious when one of the gallery workers walked up and peered over my shoulder. "You are interested?" he asked. I said yes, and, changing the subject, asked where Lucy was from. "I found her [he meant her *paintings*] hanging in a gallery in Santa Fe," he said. "There is a mysterious assertive-

ness in her work—perfect for Washington, I think."

...

Maybe, maybe not. At the Wallace Wentworth Gallery, on R Street, I stood alongside a middle-aged couple experiencing Cynthia Barber's sculpture, *Euclidean Whimsy*—an "abstract



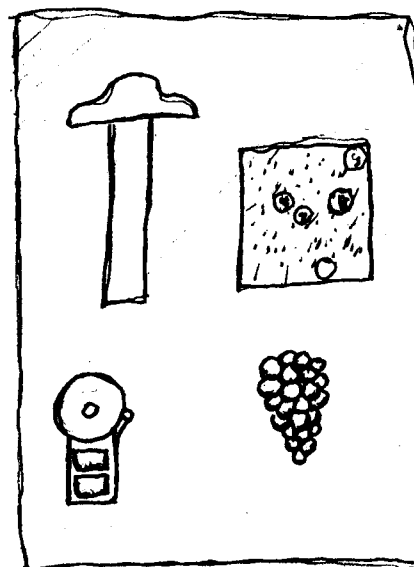
[Figure II, \$7,000]

exploration of pure form and color dancing in space," the program described it, "... created partially from reconstituted farm machinery" [Figure II, \$7,000]. "It is not pleasing to the eye," said the woman, summarily. Her husband looked at the program. "You don't think it's whimsical?" he asked. "I don't know whimsical," she said. "But I do know that this thing is not pleasing to the eye. I have seen things more pleasing to the eye in the junk pile outside a machine shop." She tugged on the shoulder strap of her purse and turned away. "You get so sick of this crap," she said.

...

To be fair, most of the Washingtonians I spoke with at the New Talent Exhibition showed a far greater artistic resiliency. In the Anton Gallery the works of Rex Weil were on display, in a show called "Brutal Elegance." "Raw and tense," the *Post* called them in a preview, but the woman I spoke with at the gallery preferred to speak of them as "unschooled." Whatever his lack of education, Rex has highly developed word processing skills, for his "Artist's Statement" ran to well over 600 words. Of his *Hotline Sentinel* he wrote, "The work, I hope, does not invite translation." [It does: Figure III, \$1,600.] *Hotline* is a large wooden plank, to which Rex has affixed a bed

of nails, a cluster of plastic grapes, several miniature globes, a T-square, and an alarm bell (batteries included)—the whole shebang slathered with black paint. "Here," Rex explained, "the spirituality derives in part from a recognition of scarcity and the latent resource and labor value retained in the art materials and in the discarded, manufactured goods. (These are relatively cheap, disposable objects only because wages are low and no one thought to charge for the water and air poisoned in their careless manufacture.)" "Well," I told the gallery lady, "I guess that means GM won't be buying this one for its corporate headquarters!" She ignored the little joke.



[Figure III, \$1,600]

"I think Rex will find his audience among private collectors," she said.

...

Tom Scott, whose "Facades of the High Culture Establishment" was at the Touchstone Gallery, also works the private collector audience. His medium is "painted photos," which involves—in reductive terms—taking a photograph and smearing it with paint. "Adding colors and forms to a black and white photograph," he told me, "is a metaphor of our human situation." The centerpiece of this metaphor—to mix metaphors—is an eight-foot painted photo of the East Wing of the National Gallery which Tom has sliced up and glued to a five-panel folding

screen. As complements, Tom also had on hand several "virtual screens," empty screen frames hinged together and given names: *Orange Fourfold Volume* (acrylic-on-poplar, \$900), *A(tomorrow)B(today)* (\$675), and so on. At the gallery, Tom introduced me to a man he called "Ralph from Baltimore." Ralph and his girlfriend stared long at *East Wing* (\$4500). "I'm interested in compositional strategies," Tom told them. "If you pursue your own strategies wherever they take you, you do indeed end up with a composition. But the question that won't go away is, Where is the object? I mean, does the composition exist? It's an unwanted question that I find endlessly puzzling."

"Well," said Ralph, "it exists in relation to the object."

"Right," said Tom.

"Because these things are out there anyway," said Ralph, as his girlfriend nodded. "They aren't going to go away."

"So you just permit the future to happen, and then you do indeed come face to face with a composition—is that what you mean?"

"That's how it becomes something like the object," Ralph said.

"Wait," said Tom, rapping his knuckles on *East Wing*. "It is an object."

"I know that," Ralph said quickly.

"Watch," said Tom. He walked over and picked up *Orange Fourfold Volume* and placed it in front of *East Wing*. "There," he said. He stepped back and waited.

"God," said Ralph at last.

"Yes," said his girlfriend.

"A whole new relationship has been established," said Ralph.

"Yes," said his girlfriend.

"Between here"—Ralph touched the edge of *Orange Fourfold Volume*—"and here"—he pointed to *East Wing*.

"So you see," said Tom, shrugging, "here's an environment. A kind of spatial exploration. But is it a composition? The questions are endless, really. And to tell you the truth, they kind of confuse me sometimes."

Ralph stared at *Fourfold Orange Volume* and nodded. "It's easy to get confused," he said. —AF

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CURRENT WISDOM

Washington Post Book World

In the correspondence pages of a learned book review, the grisly sound of a late twentieth-century Renaissance Man and Mr. Samuel Lipman's measured reply:

Samuel Lipman is a neoconservative ideologue. It was not necessary to feed him my *Understanding Toscanini* (*Book World*, March 1) in order to ascertain that he dislikes the writings of Dwight Macdonald and Theodor Adorno. Equally predictable was the core assertion of his "review": that replacements for David Sarnoff and Arturo Toscanini are urgently needed.

My essential disagreement with his essay is precisely the disagreement with him stated in my book (page 435): he espouses a fruitless attempt to turn back the clock. As readers of *Understanding Toscanini* will be aware, I argue in detail that—for reasons historical, sociological and musical—no Toscanini or Sarnoff could exist today.

Mr. Lipman's skewed synopsis of *Understanding Toscanini* reduces nuanced portraits of Toscanini and Sarnoff to sketches of stage villains. He recklessly simplifies what I have to say about Toscanini's purely musical accomplishments. He ignores my central analysis of music's "new audience," except as fodder for establishing my alleged tentatiousness.

I do not question that his essay was written in good faith. But his faith isn't my faith. Mr. Lipman's essay belonged in *The New Criterion*, not *The Washington Post*.

—Joseph Horowitz
New York, N.Y.

Samuel Lipman replies: Perhaps Mr. Horowitz (at least on his personal estimation) is indeed the best reviewer of his own book. It certainly seems to come up to his highest standard. For those who hold different positions about music and intellectual life the existence of publications willing to print independent reviews can only be welcome.

[April 19, 1987]

Nation

The *Nation's* sagacious Dr. Alexander Cockapert, in his incomparable column "Beat the Devil," coolly comments on the greatest writer who ever lived, Charles Krauthammer. Dr. Cockapert would like to marry Amy Carter: His columns, both in *The Washington Post* and *The New Republic*, are distillations of the contempt for national and international law that has characterized the Reagan Administration. It was Krauthammer who came up with the label "the Reagan doctrine" to dignify as "morally defensible" the acts of piracy and terror that he either urged upon the Administration or congratulated it for having undertaken. No journalist has called for attacks on Nicaragua more vehemently, and if a war crimes tribunal ever wished to indict a journalist as an accessory to the mutilation and murder of civilians there, it could do no better than Krauthammer.

[May 2, 1987]

Princeton Seminary Bulletin

The Yale Divinity School's Professor Letty M. Russell launches one of those richly inter-disciplinarian asseverations that make her the Dogberry of our time:

The language of war, conquest, and development is couched in the offer of national power, pride, and prosperity. Yet it conceals the reality of victimization and despair among the exploited, poor, starving, and dying peoples whose lives sustain that rhetoric. Among this group of those exploited by political messianism are the women who are the poor of the poor, the minjung of the minjung, the oppressed of the oppressed. One thinks for instance of those killed, raped, and brutally separated from husbands and children in war; of those driven to prostitution in order to feed their families; or of those reduced to blindness at the age of thirty from bending over a microscope to produce microchips for our computers.

[Vol. 8, No. 1, 1987]

New York Newsday

Professor William G. Shepherd of the University of Massachusetts proffers one of those "We Must" bulls that is the hallmark of the brain-dead progressive:

We must erase the phrase "national security" from all serious discourse. The phrase is empty and dangerous. All policies claiming to promote national security against the Soviet Union (or any other budding superpower) must be presumed to be false, pending a careful weighing of their cost and benefits.

[February 11, 1987]

Los Angeles Times

Lillian Hellman's ghost discovered in an L.A. playhouse by an energetic reporter on the *Los Angeles Times* culture patrol:

Gene Dynarski has always had a soft spot for Joseph Stalin. . . . Currently, he's playing the Soviet leader in David Pownall's "Master Class" (at the Odyssey Theatre), a fictional account of a 1948 after-hours confrontation between Stalin, his minister of culture, Andrei Zhdanov, and two leading Russian composers of the day, Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich—whose new, "formalist" music horrifies the traditional sensibilities of their leader. . . .

"Stalin was kind of a revolutionary in the seminary," Synarski said. "He read books he wasn't supposed to be reading, played music he wasn't supposed to play. No matter what you think of his methods—and, sure, some ugly things went on—there was a lot of justification for what he did, allowing for his givens and what he had to do. It was a horrible responsibility, and it was all his. There's no coincidence in Pownall's references to Christ: the idea that Stalin takes on the guilt of those 20 million dead, as Christ took on the cumulative guilt of mankind."

[May 7, 1987]

Village Voice

High culture at the gates of the sublime and the ridiculous:

Nathan Fain was a founder of Gay Men's Health Crisis, serving on its board and as its director of publications. . . . Nathan's attitude was summed up in a speech he delivered at a Hunter College symposium on AIDS, in June 1985. "We stand at a high moment in our history, actually in *all* of history," he said. "We have been stricken by a renegade germ at our most vulnerable point, our newly freed sexuality. It's a bad Dorothy Lamour movie: The volcano went off at the height of our fertility rites," . . .

Nathan made love like a savage, but was extremely civilized in most other matters. The *Times* had to be read in the evening, usually over a spinach pie at the Tiffany. *The New Yorker* had to be read on the day it hit the stands or not at all. He had the face of a German professor, possibly that of a young Emil Jennings. His body, however, was strong and lithe and capable of creating wonderfully filthy fantasies in those who got close enough. Religiously, he was part atheist, part Zen-master, and part Southern WASP with an enormous case of Jew-envy. As for the necessities of life, all he needed to survive were cigarettes, strong coffee, and the occasional catfish dinner.

"Emotions alone will not stop the dying," he said. "Magic mantras will not stop it. Only hard work and hard-won trust can propel us to real freedom, so that now we can take our place in the world, to give the world what is uniquely ours to give. . . . We must tell the world of more than our grief and our rage. We must show the nobility of our suffering, a nobility so great that finally, now, we have found the reason why we are alive."

Nathan died in a hospital room in Houston, diagnosed with renal failure, AIDS-related dementia, and pneumocystis carinii. He leaves behind a lover, Claus, in Berlin and joins another, Arthur Bennett, who had died of AIDS.

[June 9, 1987]

New Republic

In the *New Republic*, citadel of clear-headed liberalism, the rich imaginations of Miss Barbara Ehrenreich and Mr. Jane O'Reilly sweat and lunge:

Sex, whether as relaxation, snare, or even reproductive function, is clearly not dead. But it is, as we need no reminding these days, clearly not safe. Perhaps that ominous fact explains the primitive subtextual imagery underlying the present overblown coverage of what are, after all, sex scandals of a fairly routine sort. Underneath the electronic brouhaha there is a faint beat of drums, an unconscious echo of puberty rites and purification huts, an anxious reclassification of women as Woman, the polluter of clear masculine minds. Tribal warriors eschewed connubial relations before a battle, and modern men in public life may soon be required to demonstrate an immunity from women far greater than anything vulcanized rubber can provide.

[June 1, 1987]

New York

Movie critic David Denby reviews a masterpiece by a modern-day Walt Disney:

Joseph Ruben's *The Stepfather* really isn't my kind of movie. This horror thriller never quite transcends the ineluctable, grinding violence of its genre: At the end, the psychotic killer, having acquired a new family, crawls bloodily up another staircase, caught between his wife, holding a gun, and his daughter, who has a shard of glass. He wants to murder them; they *have* to kill him. We've all been through that terror crawl before, in countless B movies. *The Stepfather* is good, but it lacks the winged lyrical excitement, the visionary fervor, of something like De Palma's *Carrie* . . .

Written by veteran crime writer Donald E. Westlake, the movie harbors a subversive joke. By making their protagonist a man obsessed with having a perfect family, a man who kills that family when some small thing goes wrong, the film-makers get at the murderousness behind the American drive for bland appearances.

[May 25, 1987]

Humanist

Mr. Gary Shepherd, whose "primary interest is the promotion of a united world government through the philosophy of unitism," adds another unit to his accumulating units of fecal matter: Another myth widespread on both sides of the Iron Curtain is the idea that all conflict today can be reduced, in its simplest terms, to the conflict between communism and capitalism.

This is absurd. The major conflict today is not between two ideological systems. It is between two national powers, each competing for the dominant role in world affairs. Minor conflicts tend to become ideological conflicts because the combatants wish to attract the support of one or the other of the two superpowers.

Once Germany was defeated, the two strongest remaining world powers were destined to turn on each other because, as the two remaining powers, they each constituted the chief threat to the other. Such superpower conflict is a common scenario from history, such as Athens and Sparta after the defeat of Persia or Rome and Carthage after the defeat of Pyrrhus.

[March/April 1987]

New York Times Magazine

The perfidies of the heinous Heritage Foundation continue to spread as revealed by Samantha, *philosophe* of the bedroom:

"I'm a lot more careful now about sleeping with someone I think is bisexual," says Samantha. "This is, in a way, a tyranny, part of the inexorable return to conservatism. It's so antithetical to intermingling, so antidemocratic, it destroys the integrity and openness achieved by the sexual revolution. People are saying you should sleep only with your own kind."

[May 31, 1987]

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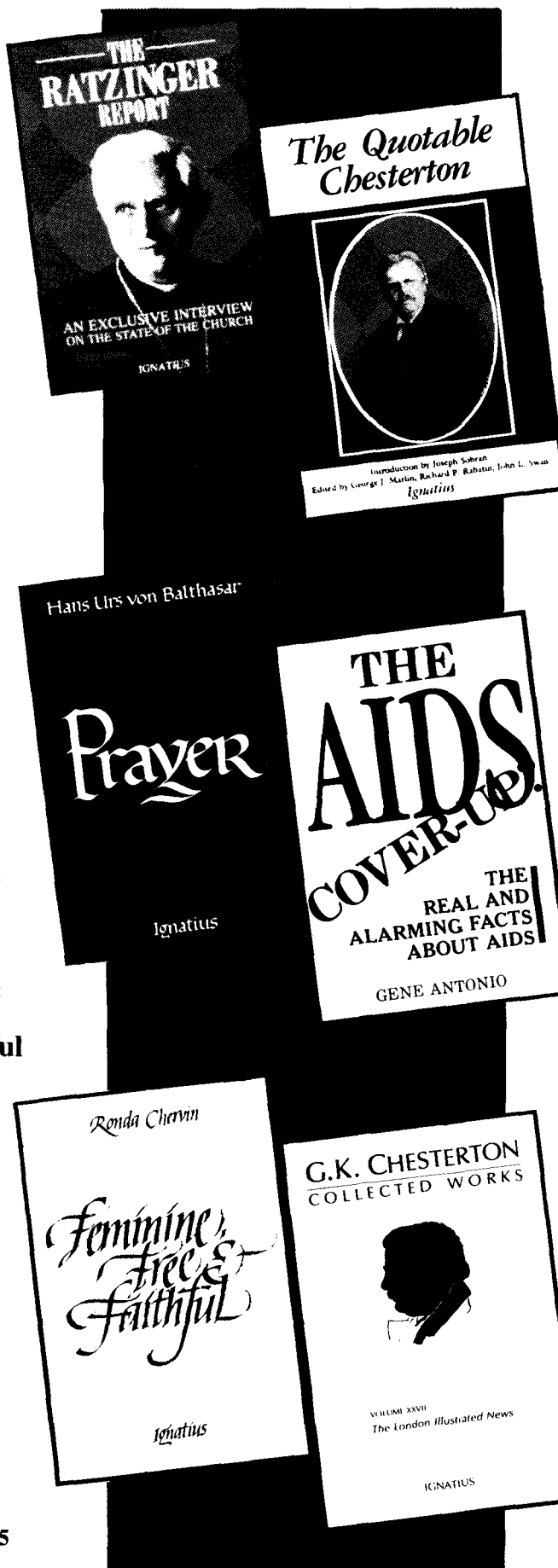
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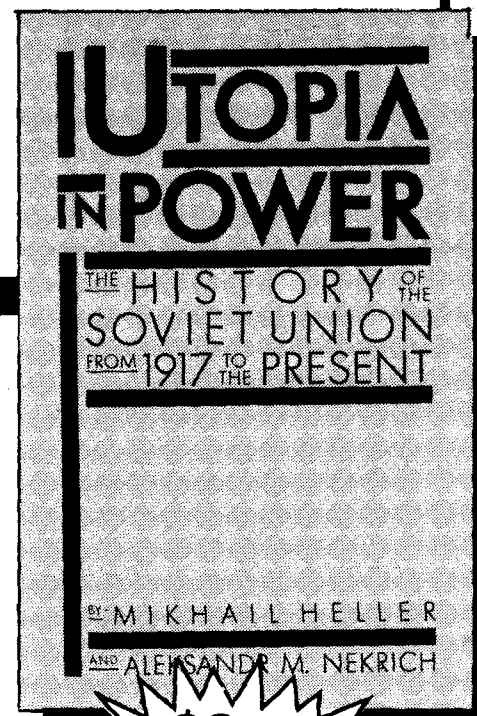
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